COOD WORK, says UN envoy Kristin Rooney, at the annual benefit of the Children's Hour, which appeals to individuals and companies to donate an hour of their earnings to fund learning projects for poor kids. (Story on Page A3)

Big transport groups shun nationwide strike today NEWS / A2

89-year-old Luneta Hotel now being restored to its prewar glory METRO / A18

Peso rises to 41.31:$1; defies regional currency downtrend due to US Fed's rate cut BUSINESS / B1

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, PENETRATING VIEWS

Bush loses close run for 'Foot in Mouth'

LONDON—FORMER English soccer manager Steve McClaren fought off tough competition from US President George W. Bush to win a dreaded "Foot in Mouth" award. (STORY ON PAGE A22)

NECKAD AWARDS FLAG-jarras Walsh jubilates after getting his gold medal and accompanying GMA Games mascot during the swimming competition awarding ceremonies on Wednesday. Walsh's winning time of 2:00.38 in the 200-meter butterfly smashed the six-year meet mark and contributed to the Filipino swimmers' 9 gold haul. (More SEAG stories on Pages A11-15)

CHRISTMAS BONUS

1.4-M gov't workers to get ₱10,000 each

By Christine O. Avendaño

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO yesterday gave the government's 1.4 million workers a Christmas bonus of ₱10,000, citing a "robust economy" and savings in operations.

"They will get the money not later than Dec. 15, said Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunyi said that those entitled to the windfall were workers employed by national government agencies, corporations and financial institutions, as well as others who have rendered at least four months of service.

Employees with less than four months service will get a bonus on a pro-rated basis.

Andaya told reporters that the national government through the Department of Budget and Management would shell out ₱7,000 for each employee and that the remaining ₱3,000 would be shouldered by concerned agencies through their savings, Andaya said.

Last year, he said the government gave out a Christmas

(CONTINUED ON PAGE A4)

Saguisag girl falls, lifts RP spirit

By Nonoy E. Castillo

NAKHON RATCHASIMA, Thailand—She's an athlete before anything else, but a nagging knee injury got in the way.

Gymnast Caleen Saguisag's valiant effort to compete at the 26th Suteschool Asian Games despite a family tragedy has become a source of inspiration to many of her fellow athletes who are still scrambling for the gold.

Caleen, the 16-year-old youngest child of Irene and Ombo Saguisag, used on the balance beam on Monday but was over-

(SAGUISAG, A8)

GMA pal wins Transco bid

Senators oppose awarding of nat'l power grid

By Abigail L. Ho and GMA Cabucungan Jr.

A CONSORTIUM BACKED BY a powerful businessman close to President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday won the right to operate the strategic national power transmission grid with a $3.95-billion bid in a controversial auction denounced as a "fatong mascio," or a charade.

Opposition senators said they would seek a Supreme Court injunction to stop the awarding of the assets of National Transmission Corp. (Transco) to Monte Oro Grid Resources that counts among its partners Enrique Razon, treasurer of the administration Team Unity in the May senatorial elections.

The sale of Transco assets has been

(SMA PAL, A6)

NOTHING TO SMILE AT: At one point during the Human Rights Day observances at the Palace, President Macapagal-Arroyo appears to be sensing a cold and chastising Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita seems not to have a care in the world. Ms Arroyo once again pledges to address the unexplained and unresolved killings of political activists and journalists that have smeared her human rights record.

Filipino UN worker killed in al-Qaida attack in Algiers

A FILIPINO WOMAN STAFFER OF the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) was among those killed in a car bomb attack in Algiers on Tuesday, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said last night.

Claro Cristobal, DFA assistant secretary and spokesperson, said the WFP announced the death of Gene Lena, 48-years old, who joined the WFP in Afghanistan as finance

(FILIPINO, A4)

3 ex-DAR chiefs back Sumilao farmers' claim

By Jerome Aning

NOW THERE ARE THREE FORMER agrarian reform secretaries backing the farmers who marched for two months from Sumilao, Bukidnon, to Manila to press the government to scrap the sweetheart deal for a big farm of the Dela Rosa-based dairy are claiming.

(SEE DAR, A4)

Ermita says Christmas ceasefire uninterrupted

By Christine O. Avendaño and Nikko Dizon

THE GOVERNMENT WILL DECLARE an "uninterrupted" suspension of offensive military operations (troops) against the communist New People's Army for the Yuletide Season, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said yesterday.

Ermita said the forces against the NPA would be declared before Christmas Day.

"But as to the details on where it will be enforced and how long, I don't know yet," Ermita told reporters at his weekly news briefing.

The Cease was recommended by Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro and the Armed Forces.

(ERMITA, A6)

Palace slams survey on corruption

By Christine O. Avendaño, Kara Pedroso and GMA Cabucungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY QUESTIONED the credibility of the survey which found that 32 percent of the respondents considered President Macapagal-Arroyo the "most corrupt" leader in Philippine history, pointing out that it was paid for by her enemies.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said he learned that the Pulse Asia survey was commissioned by "a few people ... not necessarily friendly to our President."

"There is such a thing as determin-

(PALACE, A6)

GMA now takes UN report on killings seriously; vows zero political violence

By Christine O. Avendaño and Lolit B. Salaverría

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO yesterday promised that her administration would strive for a Philippines with "zero political violence," and enact anti-subversion law that would protect rights-abuse victims, including a law against torture.

Speaking at the Human Rights Day celebration in Malacañang, Ms Arroyo said her administration was taking seriously the report of United Nations Special Rapporteur Philip Alston on the extrajudicial killings of journalists and political activists, which it had largely attributed to the military.

She lamented the Philippines' history of political violence from both the Right and the Left, and said she hoped to end the problem.

"No one should die for their political beliefs," the President said in a speech before members of her Cabinet, the Senate and the House, the judiciary

(GMA NOW, A4)

Ex-Peru president sentenced to 6 years for abuse of authority

LIMA, PERU—A SUPREME COURT judge on Tuesday convicted former President Alberto Fujimori of abuse of authority and sentenced him to six years in prison—the first criminal conviction for the ousted Peruvian leader who also faces human rights and corruption charges.

Justice Pedro Guillermo Ubiña declared Fujimori guilty of misusing his power by ordering an illegal search in his government ousted in scandal seven years ago. He also fined Fujimori the equivalent of US$110,000.

Fujimori was convicted of having a military aide pose as a prosecutor and search without a warrant the luxury apartment of the wife of his spy chief Vladimiro Montesinos in November 2000.

It was the first guilty verdict handed down for Fujimori, 69, who ruled Peru from 1990 to 2000, before fleeing to Japan, his ancestral homeland, amid a corruption scandal. He faces three other trials on charges that include extrajudicial killings of before.

(EX-PERU, A2)

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

EZ2 FOUR DIGIT

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SUPERTRIS

4 4 6 | 5 4 1

MEGALOTTO 6/45

4 18 25 28 42 43

P5,255,663.40

Big transport groups shun nationwide strike

By Riza T. Olchondra and Alvin Pepe

THE THREE MILLION OR SO COMMUTERS IN METRO Manila can heave a sigh of relief as leaders of major transport groups indicated they will not be joining a transport strike today led by the militant Pinag-kaisang Samahan ng Tsuper at Operators Nationwide (Piston).

"It is their right to go on strike, but we believe we should not use our problems on the table instead of on the streets, since it is the commuters who are affected by strikes, not the oil companies," said Orlando Marquez Jr., national president of Philippine Jeepney Operators and Drivers Alliance Federation Inc. and Alaksi Jeepney Operators and Driver's Alliance.

Marquez and other transport leaders met in a dialogue with Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes late Tuesday during which they said they would not be joining the strike.

Just the same, the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) has prepared 10 buses to give free rides if the need arises, MMDA General Manager Robert Nazareno said.

Strike monitoring

"We will start monitoring early in the morning. The impact of the strike should be minimal since all other major transport groups have said they will not join the strike. As long as PISTON does not try to force drivers of other groups to join, I don't think there will be problems," Nazareno said.

Only the major thoroughfares like Edsa, Roxas Blvd., Taft Ave., and Road 10 are expected to be affected by the strike since other groups are not joining, said Senior Supt. Antonio Gustilo of the Philippine National Police's directorate for operations.

About 20 additional PNP personnel will be deployed in these thoroughfares to monitor the strike and maintain order, he said.

The Light Rail Transport (LRT) and Metro Rail Transport (MRT) management said it will be business as usual for the metro rails systems.

The Department of Education announced that there will be regular classes in public elementary and secondary schools today, in spite of the planned transport strike.

They'd rather talk

While government agencies were finalizing contingency measures, transport leaders told Reyes they preferred to continue talks with government to bring down fuel costs, curb extortion and illegal operators, and finalize the single-ticketing system for traffic violations.

The group included Zony Manzano of the Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines (Feydap), Rolando Marquez of Makati Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association (MAJODA), Glen Martin of BSAMG MASDA, Boy Vargas of the Alliance of Land Transportation Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines (Alodap), Atty. Vigor Mendoza II of the Isang United Transport Koalisyon (UTAK), Efren De Luna of Alliance of Concerned Transport Organizations (Acto) and Mistad Dizon of the Mindanao-based group united Transporters.

US envoy lauds Children's Hour, backers

By Jude PT. Burella

BUSINESS PEOPLE MAKE GOOD business partners when they know how to give back to the community.

United States Ambassador Kristie Kenney yesterday stressed this point as she commended Filipino businessmen for the great work they have been doing in the nine years of the Children's Hour.

"What makes you great business partners is when you make sure that our youngest citizens have the opportunity to succeed," Kenney said at the P1,000-per-plate annual benefit lunch of the Children's Hour.

Kenney, a known advocate of children's rights and welfare, was invited to keynote the yearly event to raise funds for the Children's Hour projects.

She commended the Makati Business Club for its numerous efforts in corporate social responsibility, particularly its active participation and contributions to the Children's Hour.

"You should take pride in being at the forefront of pending great economic growth, especially with recent encouraging investment news," Kenney said.

Ramon del Rosario of the BMC of trustees appealed to fellow businessmen to think of children like Mariane Alegre, the 11-year-old girl of Cebu City who died on apparent suicide.

"We should always keep in mind that we are raising funds for projects for children like Mariane," said Del Rosario, chair of the BMC board of trustees.

WHAT'S INSIDE

PIRATES free 9 RP sailors /A9

PALACE TAKES up Roxas proposal on peso loans /A5

Trillanes told: Not so fast

By Dona Z. Pazybugan

DESPITE SEN. ANTONIO TRILLANES IV should not have expected to get his "junk bond" aboard other vessels.

A number of senators, including an administration ally yesterday declared they have not received their Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF), popularly called pork barrel, for the last two years.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., Senators Rodolfo Biazon, Jinggoy Estrada and Richard Gordon said Malacañang has not released their pork barrel allocations since 2005.

"If it's there, it's there. I've the record we have not received any since 2004," said Gordon, an administration ally.

The issue of pork barrel came up at the plenary floor yesterday after approbation Sen. Panfilo Lacson asked whether Malacañang had the right to refuse Trillanes' request for the release of P3.06 million in pork barrel funds.

Each senator is entitled to a P200 million pork barrel fund while congressmen are entitled to P70 million.

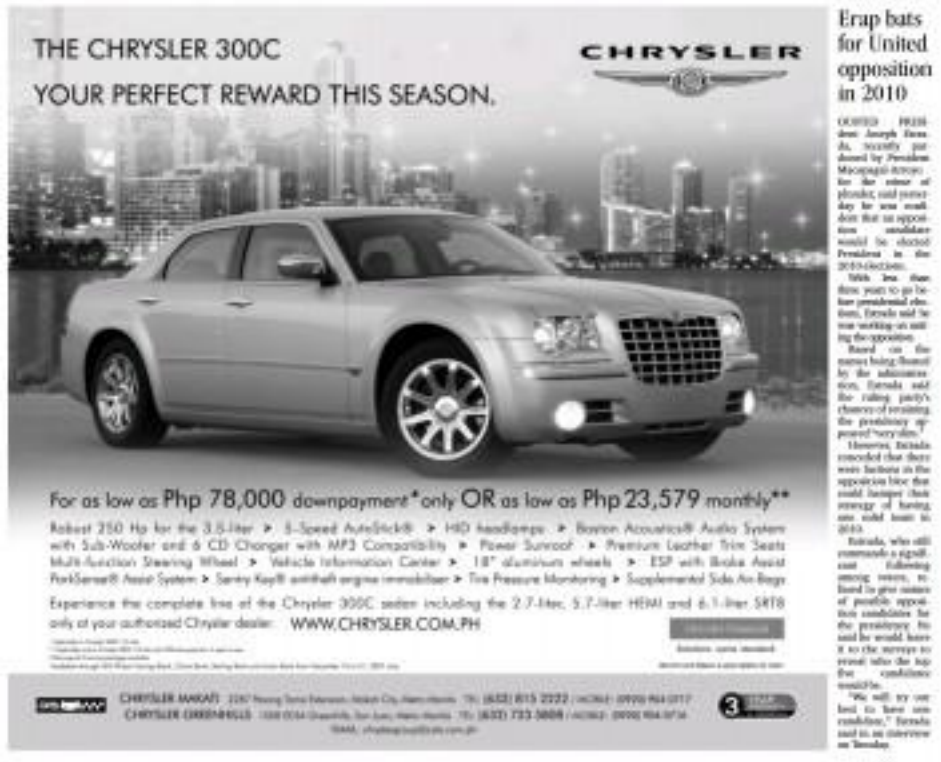
Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, another administration ally said, Malacañang could not refuse but merely "delay" the release of the legislators' pork barrel.

Senate President Manuel Villar promised to take up the matter with Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya.

But Andaya said the least he could do for Trillanes was to forward the latter's request for allocations for his pet project to the concerned agencies.

Pork barrel is part of the programmed funds in the national budget.

Legislators could identify per projects in various departments, usually in the departments of public works, education and health. With reports from Christina O. Hernandez and Estrella L. Alabastro



Erap bats for United opposition in 2010

DEPOSED PRESIDENT Joseph Estrada, recently pardoned by President Macapagal-Arroyo for the crime of plunder, said yesterday he was confident that an opposition candidate would be elected President in the 2010 elections.

With less than three years to go before presidential elections, Estrada said he was working on uniting the opposition.

Based on the names being floated by the administration bets, the ruling party's chances of retaining the presidency appeared "very slim."

However, Estrada conceded that there were factions in the opposition bloc that could hamper their strategy of having one solid team in 2010.

Estrada, who still commands a significant following among voters, refused to give names of possible opposition candidates for the presidency. He said he would leave it to the surveys to reveal who the top five candidates would be.

"We will try our best to have a candidate," Estrada said in an interview on Tuesday.

Oakwood deal 'under duress'

By Nikko Dizon

MILITARY CHIEF GEN. HERMOGENES ESPERON JR. claimed that negotiations to end the July 2003 Oakwood mutiny between the government and the Magdalo junior officers who led the rebellion were "made under duress," raising the question whether the terms of agreement were binding or not.

"You probably only heard now somebody saying everything was under duress. The one there was simply to end the siege of Oakwood," Esperon told reporters Wednesday night.

Asked if there was deception on the part of the government, Esperon replied: "Is that deception? Is that deception?"

Esperon confirmed the testimony of Army Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim at the Manila trial last Tuesday that he (Esperon) was opposed to the agreement that the renegade officers would only be reprimanded.

Lim, who was then part of the government negotiating panel, testified that he was overturning the terms of the rebel soldiers in a meeting in Malacañang when Esperon cut him off to say, "They brought high-powered firearms and they will only be reprimanded?"

Lim then told Esperon: "The agreement was already done."

Esperon confirmed what he said. "My only admonish them when they had arms, in other words, he (Lim) was forgiving them lighter punishments but I wanted the full force of the law to be applied," Esperon said.

5 civilians sought in Pen probe

By Alcuin Papa

THE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION AND Detection Group (CIDG) said yesterday it has invited five high-profile civilians to shed light on their participation in the Manila Peninsula affair.

CIDG chief Director Edgardo Doromal identified the five as civil society leaders Linda Montemayor and Jose "Lingayo" Alejandro; lawyer Antonio Rapanan; Novaliches Bishop Antonio Tobias; and former police officials Hilmo Aliaga.

Doromal told reporters yesterday that Bloc Alpha Team IV, assisted by elements of the 56th Infantry Battalion, showed the five "either in the park of people at the Manila Peninsula or on the street nearby in Makati City from the courtroom to the hotel."

Doromal also said only BPN-9 TV personnel has complied with a subpoena sent to them by the CIDG to submit their raw footage of the Manila Peninsula incident.

He said ABS-CBN merely submitted footage obtained by the CIDG in close door by their cameramen. Still to submit their footage are GMA-7, ABC-5, 2BM-4, DWIZ/DZRH-13 and Isla-20.

Meanwhile, Makati City Mayor Jejomar Binay vacuo to Southern Police District Senior Supt. Aime Calungsod and expressed alarm over reports that police investigators were apparently going out of their way to link him to the July 29 fiasco.

He said he has received information that the DPD has been trying to pressure administrators from Makati police officers that the mayor ordered them to give in the Trillanes group as they trenched toward the hotel.

Binay, who sent a copy of his letter to Philippine National Police chief Avelino Razon, stated his suspicion that it was part of another effort to compel him based on the charge that he had advance knowledge of Trillanes' plot and had supported the failed attempt to capture power in 2003.

Calungsod, the NPD's deputy director for administration, is the head of the team tasked to investigate the Makati police over its failure to stop Trillanes' group from proceeding to the Peninsula.

Binay, head of the United Opposition, said the local police were caught unaware by Trillanes' move.

He said Calungsod should clarify the focus of his investigation to Armed Forces Chief of Staff Esperon, given Esperon's admission that he had received a military intelligence report that "something would happen on the 29th or 30th."

3 ex-DAR chiefs back Sumilao farmers' claim

From page A1

In a press conference yesterday at the farmers' makeshift tent in front of the Department of Agrarian Reform central office in Quezon City, ex-Secretaries Ernesto Garilao, Hermenio "Ben-Ben" Abad and Jose Mari Perez called on the incumbent, Nasser Pangandaman, to listen to the farmers, act in accordance with the law, and revoke the conversion order to prepare for the redistribution of the contested property.

Former Undersecretaries Gary Bañares and Hector Soliman, former Assistant Secretary Clef Barkley, former Legal Affairs Director Joy Cantu and former DAR Region III Director Chadli Ala Mardiyog added their voices to the call of Garilao, Abad and Perez.

Abad actually expressed support for the farmers as early as Saturday.

"We call upon our colleagues in the [Cabinet] to uphold the letter and spirit of the rules on conversion, and to the parents struggling for restitution and increase in legitimacy," the group said in a joint statement read by Garilao.

Also present to express support were former Bukidnon Rep. Nestor Acosta, who contributed the joint statement into Cebuano for the farmers' benefit.

Abad's wife, former Bataan Rep. Dra. Abad, and Edmundo Garcia, a member of the 1986 Constitutional Commission and a major author of the social justice provisions of the 1987 Charter, were present as well.

The group also called for the immediate initiation of a cease-and-desist order, saying it would "provide all parties the proper environment to seek constructive solutions to this knotty problem on hunger."

It was Garilao who, in 1991, denied the application of original owner Socorro Quinsambing for the conversion of the land from agricultural to agro-industrial use. Quinsambing subsequently appealed to Ebdane, who approved his development plan in 1996.

Ebdane had worked under Garilao and Abad, Soliman under Abad, and Barkley, Mardiyog and Cantu under Garilao.

Only Perez, who held the agrarian reform portfolio in 2000, is still with the government, being the current chief executive officer of the Cagayan Special Economic Zone and Freeport.

No pressure

In a interview later at his office, Pangandaman said he "was not pressured at all" by his predecessors' expression of support by the farmers.

He said he would rule on the case "based on merits" and at the "soonest" possible time.

He surfaced the group's call for the contending parties to explore "alternative modes of resolving the conflict" to ensure "win-win solution to the case."

Pangandaman said the contending parties could resort to "alternative dispute resolution" (ADR), the mechanism of which were laid down last year in Executive Order No. 523.

However, he said, his office could not initiate ADR because of the pending case.

The farmers maintain that the new land owner, San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI), failed to undertake the conversion of the property into an agribusiness park, as Quinsambing had originally promised.

Quinsambing sold the property in 1989 in 2002, two years before the end of the five-year conversion period stipulated by DAR.

Based on DAR rules

The former agrarian reform executives said the case for the nonviolable conversion of the conversion order was based "very clearly" on DAR rules.

They said a conversion order was issued to an applicant as an exception to the general rule that agricultural land should be covered by agrarian reform.

"[T]herefore, if the specifics of the conversion order are not complied with within the time frame of five years, the property reverts back to the coverage of agrarian reform. It is also very clear that noncompliance with the strict rules on conversion requires its immediate revocation and distribution to the farmer-beneficiaries," they said.

Said Edmundo Garcia: "[The farmers' long march] is not a request for a Christmas gift but a struggle for justice. And I think this is important for our people: to recognize and remember—that the struggle for justice requires a marathon mentality. I would like to thank [the farmers] because [they] gave us a lesson."

Abad said the Sumilao case had become a symbol of the desperation of landless farmers.

He said the manner in which the government would deal with the case could help give meaning to the amnesty being offered to communist rebels, many of whom were landless farmers frustrated by the agrarian reform program.

The former DAR officials said SMFI, a subsidiary of food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp., could not have acted in good faith when it bought the land.

"SMFI's argument that [it] bought the property in good faith contradicts the claims of its owner that they do good business and good corporate citizenship. They should know that they bought an agricultural land conditioned upon the compliance with the conversion order granted to its predecessor-owner."

They said SMFI should likewise have known that a long farm area "very inconsistent" with the conversion plan presented by Quinsambing.

Original plan

The original plan included a development academy, a cultural center, an institute for livelihood science, a museum, a library, a golf course, a sports development complex, an agro-industrial park, forest development and support facilities, a 300-room hotel, a restaurant and housing projects.

Some of the planned projects were implemented, according to the farmers. Instead, Quinsambing had the land registered under another title and sold it to SMFI, they said.

SMFI's conversion to that the five-year period started only in 2002, when development permits were issued.

Pangandaman said he was powerless by DAR Administrative Order No. 1 series of 1999.

Speaking in behalf of the farmers, Napoleon Morida Jr., chair of the San Vicente Landless Farmers Association, expressed gratitude for the support of the former DAR officials.

He said they could not understand why the government could not make a decision on "the land that was awarded to us 12 years ago."

He added that walking 1,700 km for two months was "only physically taxing, not wasting the struggle[farmers]'s action is emotionally strong."

Filipino UN . . .

From page A1

offered five years ago.

Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo expressed the government's sorrow over Leron's death and its solidarity with the international community in condemning the senseless act of terror in Algiers," Lirandat said.

"DFA will be coordinating closely with WFP on the repatriation of Leron's remains and in helping her family cope with this tragedy," he added.

In Rome, WFP Executive Director Josette Sheeran expressed condolences to the family of Lanu, who died when the chartered van of the UN building housing the WFP offices was completely destroyed by a car bomb. Five others also died.

Lanu had only been in the city a week, the WFP said Wednesday, adding that many more of its staff would have died.

The UN agency said another traffic cop, Ida Maitenguit, was pulled alive from the rubble and would be evacuated for medical treatment Wednesday.

It said the death toll could have been much higher, as most of the WFP staff were out of the office on a training course at the time of the explosion.

Lanu joined the program as a finance officer in Afghanistan and was transferred to Algiers only last week, the WFP said.

"We have a dedicated member of our WFP family as well as many others who serve to help them in need," Sheeran said in a statement.

"I am outraged and saddened at this senseless act of violence against those helping the world's most vulnerable."

The WFP said 56 of its humanitarian workers had been killed, injured or detained so far this year.

The government said 26 people were killed and 177 wounded by Tuesday's bombs. Hospital sources contacted by AFP gave a toll of 62 dead and about 160 injured. The UN has said at least 17 of its staff died in the blast. AFP and Cynthia D. Balana

DECEMBER IS NATIONAL ENERGY CONSCIOUSNESS MONTH

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Pioneer

Palace takes up Roxas proposal on peso loans

ROXAS

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO has ordered the Department of Finance to consider the proposal of Sen. Mar Roxas for the government to shift from dollar to peso loans in order to curb the local currency's climb and ease the pain of overseas Filipino workers, exporters and the tourism and call center industries.

Roxas reported that the President gave the order during the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council on Tuesday in Malacañang where economic managers and lawmakers tackled ways how to minimize the impact of a strong peso.

"I'm thankful that President Arroyo heard us out. She asked the Finance Secretary to study our proposal and consider its implementation," said Roxas whose proposal seeks to cut the supply of dollars while easing the demand for pesos.

Roxas, who filed a resolution seeking a Senate inquiry into the rise in prices of commodities during the peak holiday season amid a strong peso, said this strategy could be implemented directly in the 2008 budget where the government had programmed to borrow P125.43 billion from abroad, of which P87.67 billion would be used to roll over maturing debt.

"We have a situation where we are flooded with dollars, yet the government still plans to borrow dollars to roll over our maturing debt. We are shooting ourselves in the foot by doing this," said Roxas who suggested that the government take advantage of the strong peso by retiring most of its dollar debts.

Losing out

Roxas made the proposal as the Arroyo administration appeared helpless in the face of the strengthening peso brought about by the continued dollar inflows and weak US economy.

In an interview with reporters Tuesday, Roxas said: "Compared to the peso dollar rate last year, our OFWs are losing P41 for every dollar they remit. At $16 billion in annual remittances, OFWs are losing P656 billion worth of purchasing power in the economy. Aside from that, the cost goods and services have not come down with a strong peso and this has been a cause of imbalance," said Roxas noting that a strong peso makes our exports, tourism services, and call center jobs more expensive.

Roxas said it's time the government take a more direct hand in staving off the peso's rise considering that the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas had already lost P829 billion to keep the peso from rising further against the dollar.

"There is no central bank in the world that is capable of blocking a market trend. There is no way that they can impose a peso-dollar exchange rate or to fix it, they will go bankrupt," said Roxas. "We should put our money where our mouths are. We are always saying that OFWs are new heroes. That OFWs are the future of the service industry. That tourism and exports are our economic engines. They are suffering now; we should act soon to ensure they do not suffer further."

Roxas said there was no point in the government's macho stance in letting the peso seek its level with least government interven-

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The Daily Gospel

Thursday, December 13, 2007
2nd Week of Advent
Lucy

1st Reading: Is 41:13-20
Gospel: Matthew 11:11-15

Jesus said to the crowds, "No one greater than John the Baptist has ever arisen among the sons of women, and yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven is something to be conquered and the conquerors seize it.

"Up to the time of John, there was only prophecy; all the prophets and the Law; and if you believe me, John is this Elijah, whose coming was predicted. Let anyone with ears listen!"

Commentary:

Our God gives hard and cold tells us not to fear even though we are described as maggots and not the God faith not a flattering description). But we are given a reformer who will be friends with a threshing sled a sharp-edged, ready-to-harvest and reform. It is our God who will save for the thirsty and hungry and turn some land of land into the most spacious place on earth. Our God loves, forgives, heals the sick, and will do what is necessary. The blood of the Lord is the body of Jesus.

And since persons John the prophet as the greatest in history and yet the least born into the world of grace, open to overturned bread—the kingdom of God is greater than John! There the least believer since John Bautista and there will be others a lowest of those who belong to Jesus but if we heed the words of Jesus then we will see the fulfillment of all the promises of God in his Body, the Church, and in those who obey him. This is what God would like for a Christmas gift.

Christian Publications Inc., 6 Mercia St. GF-01 Villamin Terrace City, GF 877 Rizal Ave. Extension, Caloocan City, M. 353-7888; Fax 353-7888; e-mail: cpi@pacific.net.ph; Website: http://www.bible.com.ph; Circulation: Publications@cpi.ph; http://www.bible.com.ph/Philippines.org; Circulation in the Philippines.

Palace slams survey on corruption

Story page A1

ing the source to find out what the product is. So if the premise is correct then you can imagine to what extent we must give credence in the survey," Ignacio said as a caveat to the survey.

He said the commissioning of the survey could be part of destabilization efforts against the Arroyo administration.

"In betting, it's called body punching. It's good that our commander is in good physical condition. When they cannot do with straight punching, they do with body punching," the executive secretary said.

Equal chance

Ateneo Defense Strategist said the would file a resolution calling for an investigation of Pulse Asia and other pollsters to compel them to reveal the sources that paid for their surveys.

Three questions

The survey asked the respondents three questions:

1. "In your opinion, which President is the most corrupt in the history of the Philippines?"

2. "In your opinion, under which administration has there been the most intense allegations of corruption?"

3. In your opinion, which President is the least corrupt or has corrupt in the history of the Philippines?"

Paid for by subscriber

Tolentino said those questions were paid for by a subscriber.

"But the fact that something is commissioned does not necessarily mean that the results will be biased because they will reflect the opinions of whoever paid for that portion of the survey," she told the Inquirer.

The Pulse Asia executive said that even during elections, a candidate could pay for the whole cost of a nationwide survey.

"But if he is losing we tell him, 'You're losing.' So whether you commission it or not, we'll give you the results irrespective of what you want to see in the results," Tolentino said.

She noted that all surveys in market research were commissioned. "But if the product is not making it, the client is out." The president is being beaten by the competition."

Skewed results

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye took issue with the sample size of the survey.

He said the results were "skewed" because the survey questioned just 1,200 respondents out of 84 million Filipinos.

Pulse Asia used multistage probability sampling for the survey, allowing it to get a representative sample of the population.

In a statement, Bunye said Ms Arroyo was making the problem of corruption seriously citing the programs that can alter tax cheats and smugglers in revenue agencies, and the electronic procurement system in government.

He also noted that the government had made headway in going after corrupt officials, as shown by the increase in the conviction rate of the Sandiganbayan from 12 to 23 percent.

"(This) included high profile cases involving a former President and a former Senate President, the conference to former President Joseph Estrada, who had been convicted of plunder but has since been pardoned, and Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia.

Because of government's efforts at combating corruption, the country got "the equivalent of P1 billion" in further improvement in its credit rating.

"Just last week, Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank praised the Philippines for being the first among borrowing countries in Asia in terms of data transparency," he said.

"We therefore vehemently challenge the survey results, which could have been influenced by a number of disturbing factors such as the sample, possible leading questions and even the person or persons who commissioned the survey," Bunye said.

Tolentino said the interviewers were trained not to inject anything that would condition the respondents to answer in a certain way.

"Those are very well-trained interviewers doing the survey. We are just reporting the results," she said.

Tolentino said Pulse Asia did not require the respondents to have first-hand experience with the five administrations.

"We just asked them, 'In your opinion,' which President is the most corrupt in the history of the Philippines?' And then they were given options," Tolentino said.

"They could have easily said, 'Ha eto among them.' They could have easily said, 'All of them' because we will note down those answers, especially if there are double percentages saying that, but we have none of those answers," she said.

People remember

Michael Tan, chair of the UP Department of Anthropology, said people remembered the issues concerning Ms Arroyo because they were the most recent ones.

"But even if the Marcos era has been long gone, people still remember his mistakes. With him, it looks like Philippines are more forgiving," Tan said.

Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano said Ms Arroyo would not have been perceived as the most corrupt if she allowed herself to be investigated for the corruption deeds.

For his part, Sen. Ilan Enrile said people could not see the benefits of a strong economy because they never felt it.

"But they are certain about widespread corruption because this is something they see, hear about and experience in their daily lives," he said.

Based on perception only

As the House of Representatives, Majority Leader Arthur Defensor said the survey was based on perception "not on hard facts."

Palawan Rep. Abraham Mitra said corruption was a problem that the administration was addressing seriously.

"All steps are being taken to reform the system, prosecute wrongdoers. (Anticorruption expert) Tony Kwok says that it would take us less time than Hong Kong to reduce corruption," Mitra said.

House Minority Leader Eduardo Zarcos said he considered the survey a validation of the adverse public opinion on corruption in government.

"Habit. Even being corrupt, the worst cases of human rights violations have been committed under benign, even supporting, 'silence' record," said Rafael Mariano, chair of the militant peasant group Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas. With reports from Norman Bordadora and Jerome Aning

GMA now takes UN report on killings seriously; vows zero ...

Story page A1

and the diplomatic corps.

She reiterated that her administration was not condoning extrajudicial killings, and that it had been implementing the recommendations of the Melo Commission that he headed two-three years.

Among those recommendations are expediting the prosecution of the cases and providing assistance to victims as well as more funding to allow for more investigators.

Ms Arroyo also said she had told the military that "if there are rogue elements, they are not condoned by the military."

"They know, and we all know, that no person is above the law in this country," she said, adding:

"Whether a former President, a member of the military or an average citizen, all men and women in this nation are equal before the law. The death of any Filipino is regretted. But in her rights to freedom of expression violence harms liberty."

Addressing torture

Earlier, Commission on Human Rights (CHR) chair Purificacion Quisumbing, who attended and spoke at the event, called for the creation of a task force to look into the deaths of media practitioners.

"You can't talk about human rights without addressing torture," Quisumbing told the President and her guests.

In her speech, Ms Arroyo vowed to bring to justice those behind the killings and to work with Congress for new laws to protect rights abuse victims, as recommended by Quisumbing.

She called on the nation to "leave behind its terrible legacy of political violence and data-enabled fear."

'Appalling': 13 reports overdue

UN THE OTHER HAND, CHR COMmissioner Leonardo Calamba III said the current human rights situation was "appalling."

In a forum organized by the Philippine Working Group for an Asian Human Rights Mechanism to address the issue, Calamba said the government had been remiss in its treaty reporting to the United Nations, with "13 reports overdue."

The reports are on the implementation of international covenants signed by the Philippines to address such issues as discrimination, forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings.

Calamba said the CHR was in total agreement with the final report of Alston, which stated in part that the Philippine military was the leading user of the extrajudicial killings.

He pointed out that since the 1970s, particularly during the martial law era, "tortured disappearances have been a problem."

Calamba cited 380 killings brought to the CHR's attention, of which 145 were extrajudicial or political in nature.

At the same forum, lawyer Rolando Quiaoit said that her most victims of rights abuses under the martial law era might have been dangerous times.

But "these times are just as dangerous," said Quiaoit, a rights consultant to the office of Sen. Lorenzo Tañada III, chair of the House committee on human rights.

Ms Arroyo pointed out that the number of political killings had dropped, and that the government was tackling lawlessness to "the fight to put an end to the legacy of political violence."

"But we should not and will not reach even political violence," she said.

Ms Arroyo also said she was endorsing "all the recommendations and requests" made by Quisumbing, including measures that would protect the CHR's fiscal autonomy, strengthen its financial resources and provide judicial powers.

"A strong and independent commission is vital in the promotion and protection of human rights," she said, adding that she would ask the budget department to study how CHR savings "could be applied to other programs and policy augmentation matter than being returned to the National Treasury."

Lesser number

At the launch at the Supreme Court of a British government-funded project to train judges in international law, Chief Justice Reynato Puno said there had been an apparent decrease in extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances since July, when various sectors convened for a Supreme Court-led summit to come up with solutions to the problem.

"It's a matter of statistics. I think the statistics will show ... a diminution of these extrajudicial killings and disappearances," Puno said when asked if the human rights situation had improved after the two-day summit.

Puno also said the writ of amparo from the high court, as well as the administration's enforcement of it, had helped bring about the improved record.

"The writ ... is certainly a part of it. But I like to think also the other agencies of the government that are concerned, also are cooperating with the courts with the enforcement of the writ."

The Chief Justice expressed hope that the legislative branch would come up with laws on extrajudicial killings and disappearances to strengthen the writ of amparo.

He said that Congress will also create the appropriate substantive laws in order to strengthen this procedural remedy," he said, adding:

"There is, for instance, in Congress, a bill making those extrajudicial killings and disappearances a specific right, one that will be removed not only by one stand before the courts but also by criminal proceedings, but also by a special law, with the offense especially penalized."

Help from EU

The Philippines may expect help from European countries to improve the human rights situation.

In an interview at the Senate, British Ambassador Peter Beckingham said the European Union (EU) and European Commission (EC) intended to meet with the Department of Foreign Affairs to discuss "specific support" to the Philippines concerning extrajudicial killings and human rights.

"We have some specific proposals. ... We hope to have a meeting with the DFA, very soon-ish," Beckingham said.

In a statement issued yesterday by Ambassador Alistair Macdonald, head of the EC delegation to the Philippines, the European Union reaffirmed its support for the efforts of the Philippine government and civil society to promote, uphold and protect human rights.

MacDonald said a European Parliament delegation that visited the Philippines last month had discussed human rights issues with Ms Arroyo and Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo, as well as representatives of civil society.

He said the delegation had conveyed the European Parliament's concerns on extrajudicial killings, although it welcomed the abolition of the death penalty in the country as well as the position of the Philippines and the Asean Summit regarding human rights violations in Burma.

Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner, member of the EC external relations committee, said evidence on extrajudicial killings and human rights defenders as "indispensable partners of the EU in its fight for the full respect for human rights worldwide."

"As of this year, with the new European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the EU has even better and more flexible means in its hands to help those who dedicate their lives to help others," she said. With reports from Cynthia D. Rebaya and Anne-Marie I. Andrade

Ex-Peru president sentenced to 6 years for abuse of authority

Story page A1

ALBERTO FUJIMORI sullen as the press room of the Special Court of the Supreme Court on Monday during his trial in Lima, Peru. He has been convicted for abuse of authority. He faces three other trials on charges that include murder, kidnapping, human rights abuses and corruption. AFP

nuisance of state funds, illegal wiretapping and bribery of lawmakers.

Fujimori showed little emotion during Tesoro's proceedings—he once was on Monday's raucous—many of his trial on charges of human rights violations.

After the six-year prison sentence was read, Fujimori consulted quickly with his defense lawyer and then addressed the judge, using he was appealing "practically" sentence and the fine. He did not elaborate.

But Fujimori's daughter Keiko, a congresswoman for his party, smashed the ruling as she left the courtroom.

"This is really an unfair sentence," she said. "Before, it was a political prosecution. Now it's a judicial prosecution. Like 98 percent of the Peruvian people, I don't trust the judicial system."

Closed hearings

Tesoro's sentence for abuse of authority came after closed hearings before a single judge because it involved a minor charge. The trials are taking place at the Lima base on the current condition of Lima where Fujimori is being held.

The search of the apartment of Montesinos' wife was conducted without a search order.

At the time of the search, only days before Fujimori fled Peru, the interior ministry said plainclothes police had seized some 40 suitcases and 40 boxes filled with videos, books and documents from the apartment of Montesinos' wife, Trinidad Becerra.

Several days later Fujimori called reporters to the Government Palace and showed them seven watches and two fancy gold chains, which he said were worth about US$1 million. He said the pieces of jewelry had been seized during the search of Becerra's apartment.

Prosecutors, however, said they suspect Fujimori was making evidence that might have implicated him in Montesinos' illegal activities, but the ex-Peruvian leader denied that.

Prosecutors had sought a prison sentence of seven years, but defense lawyer Cesar Salazzi had asked the court for a reduced sentence of four years, arguing that Fujimori was not the one who committed the crime but was simply the "instigator."

Other trials

On Monday, Fujimori went on trial on separate charges he authorized an army death squad to kill leftist rebels and collaborators amid a government crackdown on a bloody Maoist insurgency.

His voice cracking in emotion, Fujimori told the three-judge panel that he had inherited a country in a state of collapse, wracked by terrorism and hyperinflation.

"My government rescued the human rights of 25 million Peruvians with no exceptions. If any detestable acts were committed, I condemn them, but they were not done on my orders. I reject the charges totally," he shouted on Monday.

After his trial for murder and kidnapping, Fujimori faces two more trials.

In one of those trials, he faces charges of illegally paying US$15 million to some funds to Montesinos, now jailed on a host of counts of crimes, to get him to leave his post.

In the fourth trial, he faces charges of bribing opposition congressmen, illegal wiretapping and misuse of state funds to use a television station to support his reelection campaign.

Fujimori has said he is innocent of these charges.

He was extradited in September to Peru from Chile. He had flown there from Japan in 2005, in the hope he would be extradited to Peru only on minor charges. AP

1.4-M gov't ...

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bonus of P8,000 per government worker.

"This year, because of the good economic situation, the President brought her giving (a higher) bonus," Andaya said.

Government employees also receive a 13th-month pay.

Europe grants $20.6M Mindanao aid

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION announced yesterday it has approved $20.6 million in grants for rebuilding areas in the troubled southern Philippines hit by decades of Muslim insurgency.

The grants, worth 14 million euros will go towards improving governance, helping the region integrate in the international trading system and rebuilding Mindanao, which has been ravaged by decades of fighting between the government and Muslim rebel groups.

They will go to programs developed in consultation with the government and with civil society groups, Alistair MacDonald, European Commission delegation head said.

"The European Community is keen on helping the Philippines in its economic, social and political reform processes, by providing support to deepen dialogue on governance with and among all sectors of society, to promote trade and investment flows, and to help restore peace and security in Mindanao," he said.

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UNITED IN PRAYER FOR ACTION:

REJECT A MORALLY BANKRUPT ARROYO ADMINISTRATION

The events of the past weeks have shown in unmistakable terms the deep and intense political crisis that continues to engulf the nation under the current Arroyo administration.

The incident at the Manila Peninsula is a stern reminder that there are still unresolved issues of legitimacy, corruption, human rights abuses and unprecedented abuse of power under the guise of upholding the rule of law. While there may be varying opinions on the Manila Peninsula incident, it is clear that the issues raised were all too familiar. That various groups and personages continue to protest these issues is a clear manifestation that the ruling administration has done little to address them.

What is also disturbing is that the government's response to dissent has been more repressive and threats addressed to the citizenry. The images of media workers being hauled like criminals – and the imposition of a curfew like the first since Martial Law – reminds us that repression remains the principal response to dissent under this administration.

And despite claims of growth and development, and the pretense of a "good economy" in Malacañang, many of our countrymen still cry out for economic justice, for land, better wages and decent services. The economic crunch has in fact dampened whatever remaining holiday cheer there may be.

The crisis has gotten worse with many of our people going abroad because they see no hope in our country. Unless the above issues are satisfactorily addressed, we can expect the same turbulence, desperation and frustration to mark the remaining years of this administration.

As the year comes to an end and a new one is imminent, we are again called to renew our commitment to truth and justice. We are again called to stand together to call for accountability in government. We stand firm in rejecting a morally bankrupt Arroyo government as we strive to achieve national unity and renewal.

JOIN US ON DECEMBER 16, 4-7:00 PM, IN AN INTERFAITH ASSEMBLY FOR THE NATION AT THE PLAZA SULAYMAN IN FRONT OF THE MALATE CHURCH, ROXAS BLVD.

Archbishop Angel Lagdameo (Archdiocese of Jaro, Iloilo) - Archbishop Oscar Cruz (Archdiocese of Lingayen) - Bp. Dangracios Iñiguez - Bp. Teodoro Bacani - Bro. Armin Luistro, FSC - Bp. Dan Balais (P.Mt) - Ms. Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes - Fr. Joe Dizon - Fr. Jesus Mati (AMRSP) - Sr. Maureen Catalinet, RGS - Teofisto Guingona, Jr. - Mayor Jejomar Binay (UNO) - Batha Legarde - Dr. Carol Araullo (BAYAN) - Atty. Jesselina Lichauco - Atty. Nasser Marohomsalic - Atty. Adel Tamano - Malu Santiago-Apostol (WIN Rebbon Movement) - Horacio Morales - Renato Reyes Jr (BAYAN) - Hans Kiran - Ellaine Ramos (BMG) and White Mercado - Fr. Rudy Abaca - Atty. Henry Kregor - Betsy Bonifacio - Mila Savino - Ver Eustaquio (UMDO) - Linggoy Alcover - Francisco Arvisu - Evangeline De Peralta - Oscar M. Orbos - Ms. Gloria L. Arcusa - Tricia Sison

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Winning bidder plans IPO to raise fresh funds

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

MONTE ORO GRID RESOURCES, THE winning bidder for the 25-year concession to operate the national power grid owned by National Transmission Corp. (Transco), is mulling over a possible initial public offer (IPO) to raise fresh money.

"We can build up equity or partly fund the acquisition through investment. A. Brown Co. Inc. chair Wilfred Brown told the business.

A. Brown has an 18 to 19 percent stake in Monte Oro.

Other shareholders are Manila Industries with 32 percent or 163.95 million shares, Compass Lumina & Co. Inc. with 75 million shares and Lakeland Village Holdings as well as Evergreen Industries and Investment Properties each with 4.9 percent or 25 million shares, documents with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) showed.

Shares of A. Brown however closed lower by 5.1 percent or 6 centavos yesterday to P1.42.

Aboitiz-led power operator International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI) of powerful businessman Enrique Razon was also lower by 2.2 percent or P1 to P44.

Razon has a 30 percent interest in the Monte Oro group.

Razon, who is close to President Macapagal-Arroyo and was treasurer of the administration's senatorial team with Team Unity in the May elections, is chair of ICTSI.

Macroeconomic factors

The stock market seemed to be bucking on two other rival bidders for Transco in the early-morning session led by San Miguel Corp. and Metro Pacific Investment Corp., as shares of both companies bucked the market's deep yesterday.

At the end of trading, warrants of Metro Pacific were the biggest gainers, clocking 14 percent to P1.05.

Common shares of Metro Pacific also closed higher by 1.1 percent or 5 centavos to P4.35.

This was despite an announcement after the market closed at 12:30 p.m. yesterday that the Metro Pacific Group of Indonesian tycoon Anthoni Salim had pulled out of the bidding.

A spokesperson for Tesna Sicam Electrica Sucursals S.DR of Italy told the business that the company studied the "macroeconomic factors" surrounding the bid and decided to withdraw from the consortium led by Tesa Sicam Pacific Holdings Corp. of Metro Pacific chair Manuel Pangilinan.

Low risk, high returns

The Tesna spokesperson did not specify which factors weighed on the company's decision (its limit, saying merely that in all of its investments, Tesna favors a climate of "low risk and high returns."

Tesna also did not comment when asked whether its decision was affected by questions over Pao-Hwee citizenship.

"Again we based our decision on how the regulatory scenario is and the economic scenario in the country," the Tesna spokesperson merely said.

On the eve of the Transco bid, San Miguel Energy Corp., urged Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) to probe legal issues over the nationality of Tesa Sicam in light of issues raised by a New York Times report by Pedro Gallanger. Bhalegal Indaya Law Office.

Bhalendra V. Pesta, a partner in the law firm, versus PSALM and the SEC on Nov. 9 urging Two Rivers cannot be awarded a Filipino investment because its parent firm, Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC), which owns 99.09 percent of its capital, is not a Philippine company.

Pesta cited a 2006 annual report by Hong Kong conglomerate First Pacific Co. Ltd. as stating that it has a 49.9 percent "economic or voting interest" in MPIC.

If unable the case, Pesta said MPIC and Two Rivers are both foreign corporations.

Qualified bidder

In a statement yesterday, Two Rivers asserted that it was qualified to participate in the Transco bid.

"We declare the attempts of certain parties to gain an unfair advantage or to thwart participation from their own nonfeasance by calling into question our qualifications as bid for Transco," Two Rivers president said concurrently MPIC president Jose Ma. E. Lim said.

Chris A. shares of San Miguel, which are traded by local investors, jumped 4.9 percent to P55.

Class B shares, which can be bought and sold by foreign investors rose 7.1 percent to P55.50.

GMA pal wins Transco bid; senators seek probe

From page A1

described as the biggest privatization in the Philippines' history involving power transmission lines with optic fiber broadband capability.

Sen. Juanito Mocfegal said she would personally file a class action suit to void the 25-year concession to operate Transco's power grid, considered the crown jewel of Philippine energy assets.

"This has become a matter of personal survival. The President sacrificed the country's sovereignty to her greed and her cronies' lust for the world's most iconic independence, justified social services, and sacrificed national security," Mocfegal said.

A key member of the winning consortium is Team Grid Corp., China's largest electricity provider. It ranks 29th in the Fortune Global 500 list of the world's largest companies by revenue this year.

"You don't have to be a fortune teller to say that this is fishing season," Mocfegal said. "The impunity that the government has pushed deal with but [the] flagrant disregard of even it is the mark of disrespect for all opinion."

Resolution to probe

She said the victory of Razon, head of past sponsor International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI), should prod the Senate blue ribbon committee to act immediately on her resolution calling for an investigation of the Transco bidding.

Mocfegal has also filed the 19 resolutions, Dinahuh "Bobby" Macapagal Jr., and the Aboitiz family is known administration ally, in Monte Oro.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said he would support any court action against the sale of Transco assets, citing the "brazenness" by which the administration had moved to favor business interests close to the President.

Conflict of interest

"Why can't they see the anomaly of it all? Standing by itself, it should be a shock to the conscience of anybody looking for good government," Pimentel said.

Pimentel previously said that Jose Ibarra, president of Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) which conducted the auction, was in a conflict of interest situation.

"Ibarra obviously is an employee of Razon being a current director of companies in Razon's empire. It is a blatant display of arrogance to preside over bidding of an asset of the government where one of the bidders, and the eventual winner, is your employer," Pimentel said.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said: "This deal has left no doubt that this country is one big corporation fronting for a Malta-like organization."

San Miguel bid

The winning bid of Monte Oro consortia was the only other bid of $1.995 billion from the consortium led by San Miguel Energy, a unit of Philippine food and drinks giant San Miguel Corp.

Conspicuously absent were representatives of the two other pre-qualified bidders—the consortia of Two Rivers Pacific Holdings Corp. and Tesna Sicam Electrica Sucursals S.R.L. of Italy and the group of Citadel Holdings Inc. and Power Grid Corp. of India.

An industry source said that Citadel had decided to drop out of the bidding when its financial partner backed out.

A source close to Two Rivers told the business the consortium was prepared to bid $4.3 billion for Transco, but withdrew at the last minute after questions were brought to bear on its Italian partners.

In a statement, Two Rivers president and chief executive Jose Ma. Lim said the group would no longer join the Transco concession auction as its Italian partner Tesna had withdrawn from the consortium.

Bad press

No reason was officially stated for Tesna's sudden pullout, but the industry was rife with talk that the Italian firm may have been offended by the bad press that Two Rivers had been getting these past days, particularly those questioning the eligibility of the group.

Under the Transco bidding rules, bidders should be capable of forming a consortium that would meet the 60 percent Filipino ownership restrictions for grantees of a public utility franchise.

Two Rivers is allegedly not a Filipino company since its parent, Metro Pacific Investments Corp., is 99.9 percent owned by Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. Ltd.

The San Miguel Energy consortium even went as far as asking PSALM to investigate Two Rivers' eligibility to bid.

La Costa protest

La Costa Development Corp. headed by cabal mate Salvador Zamora II and former Finance Secretary Roberto de Ocampo, earlier questioned the auction before a criminal court, alleging violations of the antigraft law.

A Makati Regional Trial Court has scheduled another hearing next week on La Costa's petition for a writ of preliminary injunction against PSALM. La Costa has said it was prepared to go all the way to the Supreme Court.

La Costa has maintained it was prepared to bid as much as $6 billion for Transco, double than offered in a failed bid in February. But PSALM disqualified La Costa for its alleged failure to show that its Filipino partner in the consortium would not raise the required equity investment of $300 million. La Costa has denied this allegation.

Senators also dragged off allegations of irregularities.

Reno cited a 2006 annual report by Hong Kong conglomerate First Pacific Co. Ltd. as stating that it has a 49.9 percent "economic or voting interest" in MPIC.

If unable the case, Pesta said MPIC and Two Rivers are both foreign corporations.

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Saguisag girl falls at SEA Games but still inspires other athletes

From page A1

totally forced out of the tournament.

Still mourning

Her right knee gave way and she lay on the floor fighting off the pain. Although she had made the finals easily her coaches knew what not to push it, and they withdrew her from the event.

Polo Saguisag died last month in a vehicular accident that also severely injured her husband.

Catana, a medalist in the 2005 SEA Games in Manila, was then fighting off from training. She and her siblings buried their mother without her losing form on her upcoming stint at the ISAC.

Here Saguisag, a former senator, has been discharged from hospital but is still recuperating from the tragedy.

Catana, her eyes moistening, politely begged off from talking about her mom, the former secretary general of the national gymnastics association.

"Let's not talk about it, sir," she told the business at the Athletes Village. "I just hope my dad gets well soon."

Big tournament

For the young gymnast is not giving up on the sport—or at least not just yet.

Catana said she would rest her knee before going back to serious training with an eye on competing in a big tournament in the United States in March.

That may be her final tournament, she said.

From there, it would be off school for Catana, who's on a honor study program and hopes to attend the University of the Philippines after high school.

Ermita says Christmas ceasefire uninterrupted

From page A1

Unlike in the years past, the ceasefire will be an "uninterrupted" one for the holiday season, according to Ermita.

In the past, the frame lasted for a day or two, he said.

"It only goes to show that it looks like we have a good situation in the field that we can afford to have an uninterrupted ceasefire," Ermita said.

Prelude to peace talks

Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., AFP chief of staff, wants a longer ceasefire as a prerequisite for holding peace talks with the NDF.

"So far as the insurgents, the communist terrorists are concerned, I even proposed (that) we go on a three-year ceasefire then we talk peace," Esperon said at the Manila Overseas Press Club (MOPC) forum on Wednesday night.

The rebels quit peace talks in 2005 over the government's refusal to lobby for their removal from the list of foreign terrorist organizations. They also rejected an amnesty offer from Ms. Arroyo until it this year, vowing to continue their local-based struggle to topple the government.

Rapidly dwindling

Esperon said he expected the dwindling communist insurgency to become inconsequential in two years because the rebel ranks were rapidly dwindling.

He estimated the number of rebels would be cut to 3,000 from 7,000 by 2009, one year ahead of a deadline set by President Macapagal-Arroyo for the military to defeat or significantly reduce the rebels.

The government has stepped up its offensive against insurgents over the past few years, but there has been no indication that the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the NPA, are ready to back down.

"If we continue to allow the insurgency's pretended war, we might as well consider a war lost," Esperon said in a speech. "Aside from our economic losses, have we realized what we will lose if we let communism win over democracy?"

He said military and police operations in the countryside had dismantled rebel political and military structures and led to the arrests of top local reds.

He said security forces have reduced the number of guerrillas by an average of 1,000 each year, and he expects the number of insurgents to be cut to 3,000 by 2009.

At that number they "definitely can not topple the government nor have the leverage to exact demands at the negotiating table," Esperon said.

Amnesty

He said communist rebels had bigger chances of obtaining amnesty than military adventurists like Navy lieutenant-turned-rich Antonio Trillanes IV and Army Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim.

A pardon for the renegade soldiers would "remain a politicized," Esperon said.

He said the fact that the military never "left stones ahead" with the prosecution of the junior officers who staged a mutiny in 2003 and the 28 senior officers from the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) "Class Sanggre" implicated in the February 2006 power grab showed that the military was implementing "the full force of military law."

Demoralized

In his speech, Esperon said military adventurists did nothing "a great disservice."

He said revenge move "demoralized the troops, but also boosted the rebels' morale as attempt to grab power for themselves" and topple democracy while those in the front lines "continues to sacrifice their lives for our people and democratic institutions."

Esperon lauded consistent insurgents and renegade soldiers to "awareness of the people."

"There isn't much difference between insurgents and military adventurists," he said.

"They both seek to destroy our democratic way of life and grab power for themselves through armed uprising," he added.

But Esperon acknowledged that the rebel soldiers had raised "legitimate grievances" which, according to him, the military "continuously addresses."

With a report from AP

Bush loses close run for 'Foot in Mouth'

From page A1

Month" award on Tuesday from the British language campaign.

Mr. McGuire, whose handling as a supreme example of gobbledygook in talking about sun glasses Papua Boonoy: "He is misquoted but he's experienced in terms of what he's been through."

George W. Bush came second with 1,347 to cut tell you is that when the governor calls, I answer his phone."

Plain English Campaign spokesperson Ben Bore told Reuters: "We thought it was a bit obvious to honor Bush as he comes up with them every day."

Tony Juniper, Bore's predecessor group hands out a raft of awards mocking incomprehensible jargon in a bottle to clear the linguistic fog that so often envelops the English language.

Mr. Clarke, listed as manager of the team failed to qualify for the Euro 2008 championships, is a distinguished company that winners include model Naomi Campbell, actor Richard Gere and former US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

No shortage of entrants

There is never a shortage of entrants sent in by people fed up by bureaucratic language and befuddled by jargon.

"We get 40 to 50 examples a week, usually from British companies, including advertising and marketing, jargon," Bore told Reuters.

Offering the best way to obfuscate meaningless verbosity, Bore said: "Thinking before you write is the main thing and then avoiding using clichés and buzzwords."

That message clearly fell on deaf ears at Gatwick railway station in Northern Ireland.

The station sign read: "Every attempt is continuation of buses on the line, atmospheric conditions and possible delay notifications and be delayed or even cancelled."

Shoe repatriation area

London's Gatwick airport got 10 out of 10 for "openly but curse bottom of the class for clarity for one of its signs.

"Passenger shoe repatriation area only."

The campaign was founded in 1979 by Chrissie Maher who has been one of its leading figures for the past 14 years. Its judges members now pioneers on verbal nonsense by officialdom and wage clusters for bureaucrats, bankers and lawyers.

Campaign organizers even sent two "language policemen" on a global tour to harass India in South Africa and the United States to trash officialdom the best way to abandon the gobbledygook.

Even so, Bore does not despair.

"There has been an improvement over the years but there is a long way to go. This is the 28th year of the campaign. There is no chance of us being either anytime soon," he said. Reuters

HOSTAGE FOR 6 WEEKS

Pirates free 9 RP sailors

NINE FILIPINO SAILORS WHO were part of the crew of a Japanese tanker that was hijacked by pirates off the coast of Somalia in East Africa, have been released after being held hostage for six weeks and will return home soon, foreign affairs officials said yesterday.

Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said all 22 crew members of the Golden Nori, which was seized on Oct. 28, were "safe and in good physical condition" after being released on Wednesday.

Esteban Conejos, the undersecretary for outpost affairs, said the private had left the ship and a US-led multinational naval force would escort the tanker into international waters. It will then sail into the port of Dubai under the control of ex-Philippines captain, Bernhard Bulthuis.

From Dubai, the Filipino seamen will be repatriated to the Philippines and are expected to arrive in Manila on Dec. 18.

Romulo thanked those involved in the rescue of the nine Filipinos who included aside from Bulthuis, Wilchen Casalmeda, chief mate; Loreto Quilito, second mate; Ray Arando Arsalgan, chief mate; Dhante Dorosan, chief engineer; Adelino Amparis, first engineer; Cashin Lotus, second engineer; Lacrisano Villanueva, bosun; and Ismael Nova, chief cook.

"The Philippine government expresses its deep gratitude to the ship owners, international shipping associations, and participants in the multinational naval efforts to secure the hijacked vessel, for the safe release of the crew," Romulo said.

No word on ransom

He said that family members of the Filipino seamen have thanked the government for its efforts in seeking the release of the crew members.

On Monday, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said the pirates were threatening to kill the crew if unless a $1 million ransom was not paid.

An official in Kenya told the Agence France Press it was unclear if a ransom had been paid.

Conejos said: "We have no information on that. We look to the shipowners to resolve such issues. We have no details of the contact with the hijackers[.] The government maintains the policy of not negotiating with hijackers."

The 4,353-ton tanker, carrying crew members were from Burma, the Philippines and South Korea and up to 40,000 tons of highly explosive benzene, was hijacked on Oct. 28 as dangerous waters off Somalia's coast.

Conejos said the release was the "earliest effected" of such incidents in Somalia. He said a similar incident last year took three months to resolve. Shipnings and hijackings in Somalia were resolved in two to six months, he said. Cynthia D. Baldauo and AFP and AP

RP condemns attack on UN

THE PHILIPPINES YESTERDAY joined the world in condemning the terrorist car bomb attacks that struck the offices of the United Nations in Algeria on Tuesday, killing more than 40 people, including several UN staff members, and wounding scores of others.

"The Philippine Government expresses its strong condemnation of the terrorist attacks in Algeria this morning that left many people dead, including several UN staff members," Social Welfare and Development Secretary Esperanza Cabral told the 62nd General Assembly The Department of Foreign Affairs released the statement shortly after the explosions were detonated by an Algerian militant group with links to al-Qaeda.

"These attacks are cowardly and those behind the crimes should be brought to justice," said Cabral, who is in New York as head of the Philippine Delegation for the Commemorative High Level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the Follow Up to the Outcome of the Special Session on Children, where she co-chairs one of the panel discussions.

Ambassador Hilario Davide Jr., Philippine Permanent Representative to the United Nations, said it was the second such incident that targeted the UN since the 2003 car bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad that killed 22 people, including United Nations's High Commissioner for Human Rights, Sergio Vieira de Mello, who was then in the UN's special envoy for Iraq. Cynthia D. Baldauo

INQUIRER

OPINION

Violent irony

A NEXUS TO PREVENT ANOTHER EMBARRASSing "walkout"—or maybe we should call it a "walkabout"—by Magdalo mutineers, the authorities deployed a thousand soldiers to secure last Tuesday's resumption of the Oakwood mutiny trial in Makati City.

"There was enough force prepared for any contingency. We won't allow anything to happen," the new military chief for Metro Manila, Maj. Gen. Fernando Mosa, said. His spokesman had earlier identified the main units enforcing security at the trial: the 48th Infantry Battalion from Fort Magsaysay to Nueva Ecija and the 750th Combat Group of the Philippine Air Force. Elements from the Southern Police Command and the Philippine National Police Custodial Unit also took part.

EDITORIAL

Yesterday's hopeless repeat drew a vivid picture: "The lobby on the fourth floor [of the new City Hall building, where Regional Trial Court Branch 150 is located] was rendered a sea of differently colored uniforms—the SWAT men in black, the regular police in blue, the security guards in white and blue, the Army in light camouflage green, the Air Force in dark blue or light blue, the Navy in brown, and the Marines in dark camouflage."

For good measure, the Magdalo officers who abruptly walked out of the courtroom on Nov. 29 were forced to wear bandcuffs throughout the proceedings, while an armored personnel carrier patrolled the street.

All this, to secure the return to a civilian courtroom of what the commander in chief herself called "a few desperate men."

Understandable overkill, but then this is the way the Arroyo administration prefers to conduct its business. It prefers to respond with a massive show of force, when force is available. Recall the deployment of thousands of troops and policemen to temper the street demonstrations after the State of the Nation address in 2005, the first after the Garci phone tapes circulated.

But the administration also has a track record of using certain events as a rationalization for taking extraordinary action. Recall the long afternoon of the Betty Chua-Sy kidnap-slay in 2003, when seemingly dozens upon dozens of alleged kidnappers were captured and prosecuted for allegedly taking part in the same crime. Or recall the insertion of the military into the newsrooms of the Tribune and a couple of television networks, as a consequence of the state of emergency declared in 2006. This administration has not been shy about using overwhelming force, or the projection of massive force, to meet its objectives.

We have no quarrel with the need to secure the courtroom at the resumption of the Magdalo trial; at the same time, we do not wish to engage in a numbers game, arguing just how many soldiers are needed to guard "a few desperate men." But we do think that the deployment of a thousand troops was both over-compensatory and tactical. The administration wanted to live down the embarrassment of the security lapses that allowed the "walkout" to happen, and at the same time it wanted to use the show of force to pursue other objectives.

The irony, however, is that Tuesday's show of force only reminded us that, under the Arroyo administration, the military exercises an inordinate influence. The Oakwood mutiny and the Peninsula Manila caper were put down—decisively, deservingly—because the democratic project still not consummate a military junta.

But look where we are now: an executive secretary and former general who will not meet with protesting farmers because he distrusts the drama behind the protest; an Armed Forces chief of staff who engages in a running battle with the courts and with representatives of the United Nations, a controversial ex-general who continues to give lectures on the controversial counter-insurgency strategy associated with him, a PNP chief who takes the offensive in the administration's war of attrition with words.

Many of the Arroyo administration's legacies-in-the-making have a military or police component. Not coincidentally, many of the administration's top officials come from the military or the police. That makes us wonder: Who that show of force is meant for the courtroom in opposition Makati; her Tuesday meant to guard civilian institutions, or intimidate them?

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Slaughter of the birds

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"SHAW THAT PHOTO QUICK BEFORE THE minister is pulled down." What photo? The "massacre of the birds," answers Wild Bird Club of the Philippines' Michael Lim.

Grisly snapshots of slain birds, displayed on the internet by the Bantisid Air Rifle Hunting Club and other groups, sparked the drive to ensure 10,000 signatures to curb this slaughter. The petitions "requests media to stem shocking accounts of these hunts," its organizers add. Public revulsion may prod the government to endorse RA 9147. On paper, this law protects wildlife. Neglect renders it lunatic.

Besides browsing of the net by Asia' hugest birder, spotted the club's fabricated pictures. "Hunting conquered (sic) for the Quarry" and "Hunter" section of Bantisid Air Rifle Hunting Club's primary website," says Lu. "The photos displayed hundreds of slaughtered doves, mallards, wounding ducks and angwis."

Yet any condemnation has survivors' ears. "The issue in the province has more dead ducks around but no one else we've seen seen in the wild."

The same carnage is repeated by clubs in Cabiao, Alfaji, Talavera, Gumlaco, etc. They display "massive arsenals from pen guns to 'Rambo rifle Front" to sergeu bloge. "This screaming injustice is illegal," the petition adds.

Of course, it is. But in this country, "the illegal are the immediately," to paraphrase Henry Kissinger. "The unconstitutional takes a little longer."

Rampant outdoor fun the Philippines has 580 bird species. They range from the Philippine eagle to the new-to-science gial, discovered in Babuyan islands in May 2004 by Birush and DK photo adventurer, Jeff Kelly Gonzales. They also have 200 pairs of these unique flightless birds, reports Birdwatch, the journal of bird ornithology.

Like vines, birds links up a unique and sensitive early-warning system. When trees dry up, or birds disappear, it signals that "the environment is under such stress that species are being forced to down for thousands of years, can no longer survive," the Philippine Red Data Book notes.

Birds can't detect infiltration and water needs. But they say a guarantee of official disdain, spreading forest habitats, pollution, traps...and airguns. A University of British Columbia study warned a decade ago: "If the present rate of hunting persists in the rhinoking North Negros Forest Reserve, 20 species of trees would face extinction."

Deforestation saw "a number of bird species disappear from Cebu, Negros, Panay and Mindoro," a United Nations study noted. "Of highest priority for conservation are (subtropics) lowest forests, mangroves, limestone, ultramafic (serpentine) Mindoro."

Negros' primary forest cover is less than 4 percent. There, the rufus-necked frish has is probably down to one percent of its original population, says Chicago's Field Museum. The threatened Mindoro, a narrow, river mammal requires species and at least two fruit trees found in the 1987 Philippine Red Data Book are among those critically threatened.

Links in the country's most thoroughfare delivered almost. Others, it said 144 species and subspecies of birds found nowhere else in the world. Three of these are now extinct and, as Hyogaine sensitive fish 17, 2004, "they are now numbered among the feathered dinosaurs/dodos."

"All but one of these still living have fewer than 100 individuals in the entire population... One is the endemic Cebu flowerpecker. It's the most endangered species of bird in the world. Only four individuals are known to be alive," Antonio Isagani goes on chastise.

Destruction of rain forests, river basins, may have doomed these birds. "Overall, the Philippines today has the most severely endangered parrot and mammal communities on earth," Conservation International points out. "It ranks first in the world for the number (40) of endangered and critically endangered unique bird species."

But also, hold this added dimension: "The Philippines is third highest in the world (after Indonesia and Brazil, which are more than 20 times larger!) for the number of globally threatened bird species," Among these, 172 are "endemic" found no where in the Philippines. And 75 are found no endangered.

"Since birds easily barely survive in a narrow band of less-land forest around a few mountain peaks," Conservation International notes. "Illegal logging and clearing for subsistence farming are the two biggest forest threats. In some cases, the damage is present; such habitats are irreversible."

And six guns blaze the survivors.

The Philippine laws banked has to note exists. "Why is it that this little species is rare, and worthy the best the practices of impending extinction for one third to zero density of the species of mammals unique to the Philippines," says Conservation International.

Is there other reason why birds are done harmed? We cannot wait to find out, says Lu as the urges all to serve these grisly website photos before campaign ensure the authors to enemy them under the rug. Those who would like to make common cause can sign on. Their petition is available at this website: tollfree.ph/wwwchapterminutes/Unwinding.html. bird-massacre-archive.

Perhaps one of the more poignant comments on this "massacre of the birds" can be found in the graduation address that National Scientist Gerardo Ostadt delivered at the University of the Philippines just before his death.

"Your children will no longer thrill, as we once did, to the heart-stopping drive of a hawk. We've stopped the land of its beauty. And He who stopped the land of its beauty shall be taken tragedy to the darkness are our grandchildren... Birds of our flesh, bone of our bone."

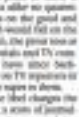
* * *

E-mail: jaumercado@gmail.com

Free, but . . .

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros



I WASN'T JUST THE ONLY SON-WORLDS IN the populated world—or to a couple of weeks ago in the United Kingdom. I was also the only one (of eight) I release country expats a free press.

Pakistan only made it into Reporters Without Borders' tourist list and though he has promised to lift it as president, nobody expects democratic leeway in journalistic reporting any time soon. Bangladesh, for a friend of mine who writes a newspaper column from there, is not free either. Its previous years, but not as lastly after the caretaker government of Fakruddin started its election-emergency rule last January. And various restrictions on the press, political and religious, apply in Turkey, Jordan and Egypt. The Philippines, which was ranked 105 in the survey and after Rwanda did not care to take them away.

It must be. Until. We had a free press, which for all its faults—most of them had the impression was reportorial standards were not particularly high, "Philippine Daily Inquirer" is not free, or not, could be ground of. Free things, however, I said, ought to be praised not about that free press. If not "press" to refer to media generally.

The first is that free press freedom rests on the press and not to the government. My reason for saying that is that while people say it routinely enjoys silver press, they normally attribute it to the liberality or magnanimity of government and not to the fortitude or vigilance of the press. They normally attribute it to the willingness of the government to respect our rights and not to the determination of the press to break to them.

The reverse exists in the country should not. Entirely stupid time notion. Twice already in the last couple of years, the current regime has tried to muzzle media, finding in the journals by many people to challenge it on various scales. The first was early last year, after Danilo Lim's ordered "withdrawal of support" when PP 1017 put the country under a state of emergency and imposed restrictions on the press.

The press refused to be cowed, defying the restrictions almost as soon as they were laid down. I myself suspect that if the press had hesitated there, government would have gone on to make life miserable for it.

The second was just a couple of weeks ago when the police made it a point to show it would give rebels and media alike no quarter. Like leftist vote artists kids on the ground and in the bed, Mayor Jejomar Binay's men fell on the Inquirer and the public. Again, the press rose at once to denounce it in editorials and TV commentaries. The authorities have since backtracked from their demands on PP reporters to surrender their notes to their report to them.

That is not to speak of the libel charges the First Gentleman filed against a score of journalists, which the offending journalists responded to by offending him some more in the form of a contract suit, which has fortunately withdrawn for now. But again I suspect that had the press been timid in both cases, government would have been emboldened to come the iron fist on it.

The second point that ought to be raised about press freedom is this country is for some reason unique in the world in that it has a free press, notwithstanding the existence of journalists in the countryside over the last couple of years, which has been suffered only by the local presence of the international press community were this country's "culture of impunity." The murder of the journalists, cause for international concern as it is, has certainly not dampened the spirits of the national press, which continues to expose and oppose, entertain and criticize, patronize and vilipend. The sheer volume of scandals it has revealed over the last year alone testifies to its vibrancy in this respect.

The power of the free press is also it is able to expose the truth—or a reasonable facsimile thereof—about the way we live, not how about how we are governed, and by doing so ensures a better quality of it. But that power is based on a couple of premises. One is that by exposing wrongdoing, the press is able to sufficiently embarrass those who commit it, enough to compel them to resign and/or shut away from public sight. Two is that by exposing wrongdoing, the press is able to so rouse the public to outrage or indignation, enough to force wrongdoers to resign and/or think twice from public sight whether they want to or not.

This is the case for example today in Britain, where the press has sufficiently embarrassed government officials to compel the resignation of one Home Secretary, and sacked public outrage over its, some to a tune to less than a year. This is the case for example in Japan where cynical politicians relegated because of charges of corruption have to resign or face the ignominy of having himself to appear his family the shame of it.

This is not the case in our country, and there's the rub. The problem is not that we do not have a free press or that the three decades are passed against it. The problem is that we have a press that is free to expose scandal after scandal, but the scandalous are no longer bothered by it, and the public it no longer scandalized by it. Elsewhere in the world, Christine of Monica, opinions consider the press among the most trusted institutions in society. Here, after spotting a public outcry. Then, there's no need to. Public officials do not particularly care to be called crooks, and the public does not particularly care to be called citizens. It's all very well to be free to denounce wrongdoers particularly to highlighters. But what if the wrongdoers in high places are just as free to be shameless? It's all very well to have the power to damn the damnable. But what if the public has resigned itself only to power damned?

Something is not right somewhere which is here—the unsatisfactoriness of repression or the blindness of freedom.

GMA safely ensconced until 2010

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO CAME OUT in a recent Pulse Asia survey being regarded by 46 percent of respondents as the "first lame ecnaiga president," even those carnage than the dictator Ferdinand Marcos and the only president convicted of corruption, Joseph Estrada. There may be vision when left longer that the perception is grossly exaggerated and unfair, considering what how the corruptions of the Marcos regime, with billions stashed away in foreign accounts. While it's time also the Arroyo administration has been identified for a lot of corruption and abuse involving Palace cronies and Cabinet members, it cannot be denied that the perception of being the most corrupt excite in large part from the inordinately large attention devoted by media to these issues.

* * *

Twelve the Marcos regime, there was notes censorship. Tales of fabulous wealth enabled ordinary men to rise to the top of society in the twilight years, but its reach was limited. In the Estrada years, the anti-Erap sentiment erupted full blast only in the months following Gloria Macapagal's exposure and the ouster trial. Until then clever never only whispers of midnight deals cooked up by his Chinoy cronies, such as those involving pension funds, and allegations of cronyism by administration allies were never the centerpiece of opposition rallies. Even after the ouster trial, the Estrada issues were no longer in the forefront of public consciousness.

It's been years, I've had my own exam, to expose misconduct, I do speak out, and the thing I say or do not enough is that we shouldn't engage in fights for the sake of fighting. When the child impeachment complaint was filed in congress, I supported it here to finally the complaints, and never it from its obvious administration serving objectives. But I also said that if there wasn't any chance of a fair hearing or for the improvement (which any fair-minded person could have seen from the start), and all completed to be exonerated, then the opposition should be prepared to simply walk away.

After all, to gain credit where credit is due, we did what the opposition couldn't do: we put the issues squarely before the people. We had been two unsuccessful impeachment attempts and resisted it but to do to because it was, because the public wasn't interested in half-assed complaints. The problem is that the opposition put it complaint before the public was ready to accept it properly, complained, it's tried to jump the gun, people would have complained, too. But better to make the opposition was prepared to hold its fire in its hand, to submit any complaint, then simply join in the fray with relish.

Obviously the frustration in opposition circles got heated, there were some who insisted that if this session opened up, action and walk in the what the people would rise up and force GMA out. Others one decided not to fall into the trap and after submitting a legitimate complaint, when it saw the administration's majority had other priorities in mind, the people of making charges from principle, she was doing it before World War II. The problem the same up until so far in the people, especially during the war years, were hitherto and hindered, e.g., it entails 0-1 or disaster-risk free hear for watching football suffering from bad beat, panicked economic flow for talented and restless, and tape (what's covered. The economy, the dehydration of food stuffs and pickling of vegetables. The idea de-stress) a piecing of catching food for the giant like and evident "magic bullet" from pandered my mission to feed the world's hungry.

* * *

As head of the Bureau of Plant Industry's Plant Utilization Division, Marin, who was a capitals in Ilocos's Carrillos, kept 600 stranded residents in Manila employed and fed, while sending food to the soldiers and foreign internees and patients in various camps and hospitals. When peace ended, she harvested her phenomenal energies in the rebuilding of Philippine agriculture. She became the Senior Extension Service she founded. Quite-consistently during the Allied occupants. Marin successfully ordered to evacuate to Batangas with her family, only "I cannot abandon my work." She died in the line of duty on Feb. 11, 1945, his victim by shrapnel from friendly fire.

* * *

The latest major event in the endowments of the Ili Foundation of the Henry D. family is in education-al developments, manifested mainly in building schoolhouses, providing scholarships for the poor and book donations for language and general studies. The Ili Foundation has established a fourth to ninth class municipalities nationwide. In the school and library assistance program Ili has formed a partnership with Ruby Hotlines Foundation Inc. since 1997 and has donated 1 million books for the Ili Foundation's "Thinker-A-Book" projects based in its various malls around the country. This per project of Ili top executive Tessie Sy-Coson is aimed to address the shortage of books in public schools and reading-averse interest in reading. This year alone, Ili's book project has collected some 252,000 books, which were distributed to public schools, barangay Ili Mall, mall tenants and shoppers. More on this laudable project next time.

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

The light of the home

THERE SOON CONVINCED ME THAT HE ONCE HER. If it could be helped, should ever leave her family to work abroad for a long, long stretch of time. That is not the family's expressed objective and aim. But is it trying to find economic solutions to stop the endless stream of mothers leaving for jobs far away from their homes, the contrasts to be subsidized damage are in the offing.

Take the case of Filipino Caregiver Case Studies of Families Left Behind by OFW Mothers" title to what happens when the mother is away for long. The title alludes to mothers as light and candidate to "the lights of the home has gone." That description of the state of affairs in the Philippines is not lost on the homeless left behind themselves. They know what it is like, they remember the one the light went out.

The little book is a compilation of case studies by psychotherapists and possible book author Ma. Theresa Carandang, Ateneo Counseling, and psychologist Beverly Alcaraz Siason and Christopher Carandang. Each OFW families are featured, each of them with the individual problem of fathers and children (and mothers in some cases), more feelings, mental issues, hopes and problems, as well as how they cope with their problems. Plus many interviews, but this is getting ahead of the review.

The cases are presented in a simple, straightforward manner, meaning they are easy reading. They are not written for literary or financial journalism or are with many phrases and colorful description.

The approach used is the family-systems approach with a clinical phenomenological method, which means going into the inner dynamics of the families and even into the realm of feelings. Psychotherapy-technical terms are avoided, for the most part, during most of the review.

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The approach used is the family-systems approach with a clinical phenomenological method, which means going into the inner dynamics of the families and even into the realm of feelings. Psychotherapy-technical terms are avoided, for the most part, during most of the review.

The cases are familiar with our stories, sometimes sad lines, each case different from the other, but with as many commonalities in the way they cope with the absence of a most important members of the family of the mother. She will be missed, the mother has the title since, not simply the wife.

After reading all the case studies, I could see that it is no mother that "fate or enhancer" is missed. It is the absence of his children's mother

HUMAN FACE

Mrs. Coreen P. Reyes

that the husband must deal with first. And so if the case studies give much attention to husbands (including their own growing up years), it is in order to show how they cope with the burden of parenting that is thrust upon them.

"Many have to some kind husband fathers refer to their wives, with some self-deprecating humor for sure. "Ha" from sassy or modest and "tay" from tomo or father. Or, for 11 step-siguro, I had done a story-cess left behind husband father who got married to the third (wife with spheres), with only a sister of self-pity.

But it is the children... yes, the individual children... who feel their mother's absence in a very individual way. The oldest adolescent, the middle child, the one in their sleep or left "alone" with the young ones who couldn't remember the day their mother left, the baby of the family... each one feels the absence in his or her own way. Each one acts out feelings, cope differently.

That is one of the things that is passionately your because of death or separation. This is a case of one is sure but she is not there, motivation and related feelings are to be expected.

In the Bolinao family, it is the adolescent who experiences the most difficulty in coping. (And how happy). "The daughter's longs for her mother has appreciate the money her mother sends. She copes with the help of her best friend, TV sports, school and church. She wishes her father were strong, "Monday." She misses her mother "so much."

The Bernardino family has been able to adjust well mainly because of the father's openness to change and his willingness to take over the domestic base. And to this results Fernandez's case

Mrs. Coreen P. Reyes

does not leave the husband and children behind. Instead, she takes them with her. Her husband is also able to adjust to the new environment and thus has helped her cope.

But there are problem husbands, as there are problem fathers. Men who can't cope and who take to drinking, gambling and even physically abusing their children.

The cases are perhaps the most problematic. A son, Gio, feels resentment and does not appreciate his mother's sacrifice. "He thinks that he staying with the family instead of leaving is a bigger sacrifice." But the issue is a bigger sacrifice than to leave. The issue of coping is through friends, school and his music."

A whole section is devoted to analyses of situations, highlighting the coping mechanisms that seem problematic and those that seem to be adequate (expressive activities like art, play, etc.), what should be discouraged (suppression, consumerism with gadgets and games). What it the role of the school, the church and the community?

It must be added that there is a number of interests in the issues presented left on each those who, leaving their children instantly sad and lost and without understanding the reasons for leaving. What could be worse than that? And if there is the story and coping mechanisms between the father and the children, what happens next?

One of the suggestions raised in the book is the setting up of support groups for fathers at the barangay level. It can be called Ahlikbi Fathering Center (AbbaFather stands for Amo ng Magaling Mag-ingat ng Bata—fathers who are great in caring for children).

Counseling, Siason and Carandang suggest, for a team of psychologists and volunteers work with the government to start such pilot centers. There could then be duplicated in other barangays.

There should bring some light back to many homes.

* * *

Send feedback to cerwp@skyb.com.ph

A limited and limiting consensus

FOR THE SAKE OF US, THE BOTTOM LINE IS the Macroasian belief that "nothing succeeds like success." However, that doesn't mean that other factors are not important in the success formula by people, who believe success is the only thing that matters, have no basis or usefulness.

I would opine that organizations Undoing so, in search of only success have no success to speak of.

One can vigorously debate organizational positions, but in the end one complies or leaves. So far, I've seen no reason to disengage from any of the organizations to which I belong.

I don't agree, however, with the "end justifies the means" philosophy. Ito ang sabi ko, the ends don't justify the means. Ito ang sabi ko, the means justify the ends.

Without going into the semantics of the two statements, I'm convinced that the means are more important than the ends. Otherwise, we would be in the jungle where might is right.

Many of the problems we have in our country today are the result of the "ends justify

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"Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." (Rom. 13:11)

AS WE CELEBRATE THE SEASON OF ADVENT, we are invited to be awake and prepared. Advent means, "coming in arrival," thus we must be ready to receive the message of God's coming through the Messiah. We need advent to remind us that justice and peace will be achieved in the future amid the signs of the times.

The Order of Catholics Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation shares the call of prophet Isaiah and Apostle Paul "that people will come together in the Lord's name. Wars will cease and there will be peace."

We respond to this challenge as we face the darkness brought by the glaring issues of large-scale corruption, human rights crisis and economic disorder that still await manifold and just resolution.

We mourn for poor 12-year-old Mohamad Alajar who ended her life by hanging because of extreme poverty. We are scandalized by the arrest of corruption and bribery, including the anomalous P889-[illegible] deal and the distribution of "mid's Christmas gifts" to win over congressmen and governors to the side of the administration. The multi-million-peso unsolicited water for people over more dispossessed, including the P728-million fertilizer grab, the $2 million Cagayan power plant payoff, the P28-billion Seawolf project, the P200-million Jose Pidal bank account, the P1.3-billion Kiko Pangilinan property scam, the P1.2-billion Hello Garci scandal, the P1.1-billion NBN-ZTE deal, the P1.9-billion Northrail project, the P2-billion Subic-Clark railway project, the P130-million Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard complaint, the P1.3 billion Macapagal Boulevard complaint, the P1.3 billion Macapagal Boulevard complaint, the P1.3 billion

Across the NATION

In Pampanga, 'jueteng' is STL, says new group

SMALL PRY. Alleged "jueteng" collectors toil in San Fernando City. LA LIBAN

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—THE government-run small town lottery (STL) is largely known to many bettors in Pampanga as "jueteng," the chair of the Pampanga Anti-Gambling Council said.

"To common folks, they don't call STL as 'STL.' They call STL 'jueteng,'" Fr. Shalou Reapor, PAGC chair, said at the launch of the council here on Tuesday.

"It is still the same. It's jueteng. Collectors go to houses and legalizing jueteng does not make it moral," he said.

In a manifesto, the PAGC said "jueteng and STL have threatened the moral values of our families... The betting transaction is most unjust because as people give their money to the bet collectors, there is no equal exchange of goods or services."

Questions

"Moreover, we should ask the following questions: In the absence of accountability, where does the hard-earned money of the people go after it has been placed into the hands of those who gather bets? Where is the money of the community siphoned and channeled to?" he said.

Reapor said the PAGC wants to stop both illegal and legal gambling and will work for the cancellation of STL next year.

"Illegal and legalized gambling... make powerful and influential the gambling operators and some politicians who benefit from them," said the manifesto signed by civil society leaders who also joined the launch of the Kapampangan Coalition Inc., by far the broadest civil society group in the province.

As it called bettors to stop tying their luck on jueteng, STL and other forms of gambling, PAGC asked government officials and local executives to "resist the temptation of accepting jueteng money."

It called on military and police officials to "enhance the law and dismantle illegal gambling operations."

Values

It asked schools, universities and parishes to "promote virtues and moral values" and urged civic leaders to be part of the crusade.

"We call on gambling operators and those who support them to stop taking away the hard-earned money of our people and to stop distorting the moral values of the Kapampangan and even people of other provinces where this form of gambling is now present. We pray that your life is liberated from gambling," the PAGC said.

Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon

CAPT. COLIN P. Kelly Jr., the first American hero in World War II, is officially honored by the Philippine government through a peace memorial stone at the Clark Freeport.

1st US WWII hero honored in Clark

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CLARK FREEPORT — A HERO HONORING: America's first hero in World War II was recognized here on Monday, the first to be built in his name in the Philippines in post-US bases years.

The opening of the Capt. Colin P Kelly Jr. Peace Memorial Shrine followed that of the nursing shed here of a US Navy medical expert officer in Cebu's hometown in Malvar, Batangas, according to Lt. Col. Clay Crawford, chief of the US Air Force program of the Joint US Military Assistance program during the rites.

Speaking on behalf of US Ambassador Kristie Kenney, Crawford said the heroism of Kelly, then 26-and-a-half bombers pilot, recognized the Americans nation after the Dec. 8, 1941 bombing by the Japanese of Pearl Harbor in Hawaii.

Clark, a former US Air Force base until 1991 and now an economic zone of the Philippine government, was an "extremely fitting" venue of the shrine, Crawford said.

It has become the site of Balikatan military exercises between Filipino and American troops since 1999, he said. The joint war games resumed under the Visiting Forces Agreement.

The shrine, a 50-square meter raised flower garden with Kelly's statue on a stone pedestal, is "absolutely beautiful," said Crawford. It is located beside the tarmac from Kelly Theater.

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DPWH execs sued for scam in camera project

WHAT WENT BEFORE

IN MARCH 2007, Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez ordered the Deputation to investigate the allegedly overpriced surveillance cameras installed in the cities of Cebu, Lapu-Lapu, and Mandaue in preparation for the 12th Asean Summit held in Cebu in January this year.

The government, through the Department of Public Works and Highways, bought 42 surveillance cameras that were installed in the Asean conference routes or the streets traversed by the heads of state and delegates.

With a P66 million price tag, the cameras were reported to have cost the government about P2 million each.

It was local businessman Dinubgan Saavedra's claims that prompted the investigation. Saavedra's firm, Philcam Cybersonic Development Corp., lost to Manila-based Trans Communications in a bidding for the surveillance camera project.

Philippine National Police officials have told investigators from the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission that the PNP had not yet signed papers signifying that they were accepting the Trillos cameras because those that have been delivered "did not reach specifications." Some units were reported to have been malfunctioning.

Inquirer Research

By Jaime R. Balanlay
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—A FORMER MILITARY general director of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and nine other government officials were charged with grave misconduct and graft for the purchase of P83 million worth of closed circuit TV (CCTV) cameras for the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Summit held last January.

Director Virginia Palanca Santiago, of the Visayas Ombudsman, said the DPWH officials did not comply with bidding procedures under Republic Act No. 9184, or the Government Procurement Act, when the department implemented the traffic surveillance equipment project.

"We already upgraded the inquiry into criminal and administrative cases. We found that the process of bidding was not followed. We based our findings on the Commission on Audit report," Santiago said.

Former DPWH regional director Rolex Lala, DPWH assistant regional director Herlinda Abiera, Agustinito Hermano, Luis Gubaig, Severino Sitaro and other members of the bids and awards committee and technical working group, headed by lawyer Ayoob Munggia, were also charged.

The 12-page final evaluation report of anti-graft commissioner Roderick Bitara said there was no justification for the DPWH officials to forego of bidding for the CCTV project.

Bitara, in his report, said the DPWH should have scheduled the bidding earlier and shortened the process to allow suppliers to meet their targets.

At least 45 units of cameras were installed on Dec. 9, 2006 along the Asean summit's ceremonial route to enable the police to monitor the convoy of Asean leaders.

The case against the DPWH officials stemmed from the plunder complaint filed by Cesadeo Saavedra, project manager of Philcam Cybersonic, and Cebu Development Corp., on the alleged irregular termination of the contract between Gibson and the DPWH for the supply, delivery and installation of traffic surveillance equipment.

Saavedra accused DPWH officials of favoring Tritton Communications Corp. when it terminated the P77.8 million contract with Gibson, which won the bidding on Oct. 30, 2006.

The DPWH issued a contract to the favored purchaser earlier on Nov. 6 last year in Cebuana. But Lala, on Nov. 29, terminated the contract with Gibson for its failure to supply the materials and equipment on Nov. 30.

The following day, DPWH awarded Tritton Communications Corp. the project worth P83 million and, on Dec. 9, Chief Insp. Jerry Leopoldo said in a text message to reporters that the installation of the cameras was completed even without the authority of Chief Supt. Silverio Bacalla, police regional office chief.

The Ombudsman said there was prima facie evidence that the DPWH caused injury to Saavedra when the contract was terminated in favor of Tritton Communications.

Bitara, in an interview, said Leopoldo was not included in the charges because Alarcio filed a separate administrative and criminal charge against Leopoldo at the military Ombudsman.

BEST EVENT
The Dinagyang Festival in Iloilo City was recently awarded by the National Convention of the Association of Tourism Operators (Atop) as the Best Tourism Event in the country, to second in as many years.

Palawan awaits P3-B windfall from gas

PUERTO PRINCESA—The provincial government is expecting the release of at least P3 billion as its royalty shares from the Malampaya natural gas project in northern Palawan as part of an agreement it forged with the national government.

The amount is three times the P1 billion the realize expected as the accumulated share of the province from the natural gas royalty currently being contested by both parties at the Supreme Court.

Royalties from the Camago-Malampaya gas reserves off El Nido town have accumulated since 2002, but the national government one the provincial government being able to utilize the funds because of the legal dispute underlying.

Describing the provisional income agreement as a "breakthrough" in the dispute, Governor David Hosaka said the provincial board on Tuesday that the unfreezing of the funds would help major provincial projects.

"The prime utilization of this money will ensure the speedy implementation of projects identified in the annual investment plan of the province," he said.

He explained, however, that the actual amount to be released to Palawan "is subject to the availability of cash" as stated in the agreement.

Although Hosaka's total share from the Malampaya project is around P31 billion, he said "the national government is not in a position to release that amount." Rudmerlin Ando, Inquirer Southern Luzon

NEWSBRIEFS

Cop chief vows gambling end

SPECIAL TO CITY—The provincial police chief of Misamis Occidental vowed to quit his post if he failed to stop the operation of an illegal numbers game based on the results of the daily Swertres draws of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO).

Provincial police director Eric Supl. Erwin Villaos Jr. said he will stop the game or lose sweeps.

He said the police campaign against all forms of illegal gambling in the province was successful.

He said illegal gambling had been "normalized" in the cities of Ozamiz and Oroquie, and in the towns of Bonifacio, Calamba, Clarin, Jimenez, Plaridel, Sapang Dalaga and Tudela.

But Loreto Leo Ocampo, however, said he was not satisfied with the police drive because only the "small fishes" were caught while the perennial "big ones" are untouched.

Ryan B. Rosauro, Inquirer Mindanao

Plant tree, wed later

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—A city councilor here has proposed an ordinance that will require marrying couples to plant trees before they are given marriage licenses.

Councilor Basile Rivarola, a former journalist, said requiring marrying couples to plant trees would help in efforts to protect the environment.

Rivarola said since his proposal becomes an ordinance, it would also instill awareness on environmental protection among couples and their future children.

Apolinar Dann, Inquirer Mindanao

Floods hit Davao villages

DIGOS CITY—Floods, triggered by two days of incessant rains starting Monday, inundated several villages of Malita and Santa Cruman in Davao del Sur but no casualty had been reported so far.

In Santa, the floods damaged books, school documents and computers at the Santa National High School.

Classes were also suspended because of the floods, according to officials.

In Malita town, at least 150 families were displaced when floodwaters rose to more than one meter in Barangay Poblacion.

Malita Mayor Benjamin Bautista said those displaced by the floods were residents living near tributaries.

Orlando Dinoy, Inquirer Mindanao

2 shot dead in Davao

DAUIM CITY—Suspected communist rebels shot dead a man and his son, who were allegedly acting as military informers in nearby Paradise City in Davao del Norte early Wednesday, police said.

Chief Insp. Raymundo Lozano, Paradise City police chief, identified the victims as Alberto Montenegro, a former rebel-turned-heavy equipment operator, and his son Abet, 23, a laborer.

Lozano said the victims were riding a motorcycle on their way to work on a drainage repair project of the city government when attackers in Barangay Sto. Niño at around 7:15 a.m.

The assailants, who were also on a motorcycle, immediately fled after the attack, he said.

Nestor Cuy, Inquirer Mindanao

NPA rebel killed in clashes

DASMARIÑAS, Lucena City—A rebel was killed Dec. 10 in an encounter between communist guerrillas and government forces in southern Quezon, according to a military report.

The report also said three Army soldiers were wounded in two separate encounters with NPA rebels.

Maj. Randolph Cabangbang, from the Armed Forces Southern Luzon Command, said the unidentified body was left behind by his comrades in Sitio Mabolalis, Barangay Pagsanghan, General Nakar town.

He said one soldier was also wounded in the encounter.

Two Army soldiers were also injured in a separate gun battle in Barangay Catablan, Perez, Lagonoy and Presa.

Cabangbang identified the wounded soldiers as Pfc Ernesto Dacanay, who suffered a bullet wound in the right leg, and Pfc Rodolfo Bandola, who was hit in the right arm.

Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

Holiday today in Gen. Trias

GENERAL TRIAS, Cavite—Celebration in 2008 founding anniversary with a special proclaiming holiday today, Dec. 13.

The day will start with a Mass at 7 a.m. to be followed by a motorcade and a sports festival for all municipal employees, according to a news release.

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Ancient burial urn retells Bicol epic

By Joan Bazurto Jr.
Naga City

A PRE-HISPANIC BURIAL urn at the Museo de Concilio de Naga in Naga City speaks of Bicol's Ibalon epic starring King Handiong, according to a study of a Filipino anthropologist.

Dr. Jesus Salazar believes that the urn's cover design also reflects the period when the inhabitants of the archipelago were starting to relate with their Indo-Malaysian neighbors.

A famous son inside graduate of history from the University of the Philippines ranks a freelancer in ethnology from the University of Paris, Salazar interpreted the design figures to be characters and creatures of the Ibalon epic.

His study was published as a book titled "Libro ni Epiko: Ang Talak ng Tapayang Libingan ng Libmanan, Camarines Sur."

The urn comes with a 32-centimeter circumference, details engraved form and figures around a pyramid like stones that convey lines from the ancient epic.

No living tradition

Salazar does not consider Handiong's story a real-or-less epic, or a living tradition interviewed with peoples' beliefs and religious practices, like the Darangen of the Maranaos, Ulahingan of the Manobo, and Ulaging from Bukidnon.

It narrates the mystical origins of the first men and women of Ibalon and Bukon (name of the provinces of Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Albay, Sorsogon, Catanduanes and Masbate), and the exploits of the warrior leader Handiong, one of the heroes of Ibalon.

Handiong, as the epic goes, fought a giant cyclops for 10 months, defeated the monstrous Bantong and the Bawon Kalatong, and won over the seductive serpent Oriol before starting a village.

The place prospered. Soon, the inhabitants invented basic implements.

King

According to carbon-14 dating analysis, some historical buffs have speculated that the burial urn, unearthed in 1982 in Ibalon, Libmanan, might have contained the remains of Handiong himself.

In the epic, Handiong was the king of Libmanan who slew 1,000 warriors led by Bantong to kill the half-man, half-beast giant monster Ibalon. Handiong slew Ibalon while sleeping in a cave dwelling.

Handiong and his warriors came to Ibalon (Spanish colonizers once called Ibalon the "Bicos de Ibalon) to "clear" the place and start planting, but the king was challenged by a serpent called Oriol or Diwata who later became a close ally in building the region's civilization.

Arejola said the urn had yet to be carbon-dated to determine its age, but the said several experts had already examined and confirmed its authenticity and prehistory, while others were skeptical.

Salazar traced the publisher of the "king martyrdom" five-year Ibalon epic to Spanish time from Castaño in the 1800s.

He ascertained that another friar, Bernardino Melendreras, wrote it in Spanish, using a European literary form in one part. But he finds the remaining parts "more authentic."

The anthropologist compared and contrasted the designs and contents of the burial urn with those of similar artifacts found elsewhere in the Philippines to arrive at the period of 5000 BC to 10 AD when the burial urn cover was crafted.

Salazar traced its source from the villages of Pare or Bigaha in Libmanan, where the owner of artifact collector Dr. Ernesto Almeda said they frequented to buy artifacts in the 1980s. Almeda died in 1998 and left no catalogue of his large collection, causing him frustrated discover signs and frame age instruments in Chinese pieces latewares.

Dora and Bigaha were mentioned by Centrato-Ibalon ethnologist Fedor Jagor in 1852 archeological finds, such as human remains, deer bones, jabalee and pots, during a road construction, Salazar said.

Doubts

National Museum officials consulted on the burial urn's cover, however, doubted the authenticity of the piece. It was bought from an antiques dipper and not discovered through scientific methods of archeology, they said.

Dr. Jesus J. Peralta, a retired anthropologist and archeologist of the National Museum, wrote that "the burial urn with eminent like cover with incised designs was brought from a vendor, so that it cannot be ascertained where it came from, which was most likely from Mindanao."

But Salazar said the absence of a scientific archeological process could be satisfied with "typologically comparing and correlating a piece with pieces discovered in situ." He also cited the burial urn's link with a second cover which was excavated in Calatagan, Batangas, as one example of one another's pieces not obtained in situ.

The National Museum even declared the Calatagan urn a national treasure and the "first artifact ... to contain evidence of ancient Philippine writing," he said.

Finding meaning

Trying to interpret the figures and the tableau on the cover of the Libmanan urn, Salazar followed the three-triangular divisions joined by a central pyramid like figure. Each division contains figures that he believed were characters of the Ibalon epic or depictions of people's life in pre-Hispanic Bicol.

Salazar named the groupings "Ang Tatsulok ng Banga (Triangle of the Skull)," "Ang Tatsulok ng Apoy (Triangle of the Sun)," and "Ang Tatsulok ng Sibuj (Triangle of the Mouth)," based on the differentiating figure in each of the three sides of the tower like structure. He considered these episodes of the epic.

"Ang Tatsulok ng Banga" has a miniature head like figure that Salazar sees as a skull. He explained that it lacked features to represent a human head, like hair, discernible face, teeth, ears, while its discernible eyes were mere points.

A comment before the skull with two elongated figures tries to depict a ritual of letting to the ancestors practiced by pre-Hispanic Filipinos, he said.

Representations

"Ang Tatsulok ng Apoy" has curvilinear and sun representation, with at least 32 dia. crinkle rays drawn on one side of the coral cover like figure and four "points" on the surface on the right side of the animal.

Salazar commented the figures as indicating solar were four. He explained that the scene reflected the pantheistic time for many, he said, the ancients had no more ring and did not pull a plow. The Spanish colonizers introduced the plow, he said.

He considers the "Ang Tatsulok ng Sibuj" the most complex composition. He identified as a crawling human figure bending to the right hand is reversible; another human figure that seemed to be kneeling, head to mouth like opening; two deer like figures and another animal like figure.

Salazar interpreted those to refer to an episode in the epic in which Handiong confronted the serpent. The mouth-like opening, he said, was actually a cave entrance. He presented "tangan" as a serpent, and the kneeling figure as Handiong.

THE BOOK "Libro ni Epiko: Ang Talak ng Tapayang Libingan ng Libmanan, Camarines Sur" by ethnologist Jesus Salazar analyses the burial urn cover design as reflective of Bicol's folk epic, the Ibalon. CONTRIBUTED

Philippine Electricity Market Corporation

ANNOUNCEMENT

In view of numerous requests from the members, the Office of the Corporate Secretary of the Philippine Electricity Market Corporation (PEMC) will continue to receive nominations for candidates for Independent Directors up to 5:00 p.m., 14 December 2007. The acceptance of nominations received after the original deadline of December 7, 2007 will, however, be subject to the approval of the Secretary of Energy and PEMC Board Chairman Angelo T. Reyes of the change in schedule/timeline.

Inquiries may be directed to -

Office of the Corporate Secretary
Philippine Electricity Market Corporation (PEMC)
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12 December 2007, Pasig City

More Sports stories and SEA Games updates on A21 to 26

SPORTS

'Hungry' Tigers snack on Magnolia

By Jaime Ramirez

THESE PACK OF TIGERS ARE REALLY, really hungry.

Coco-Cola crawled from 15 points down in the fourth quarter and went on to devour Magnolia, 114-106, for their third straight win in the Smart-PBA Philippine Cup last night at the Araneta Coliseum.

Rookie Sonjay Barreals set another career-high by pumping in 33 of his 35 points down the stretch and the Tarlac native had another monster game of 25 points and 15 rebounds for the Tigers' fourth victory in 12 games.

"I promised to do everything to...to...possible just to win this game," said Tarlac. Since his arrival via a trade, the 6-foot-9 former MVP has led his team to form wins in four games.

Barreals drained three crucial three-pointers while Tarlac relentlessly hammered the paint as the Tigers recorded 22 quick points that ensured a 99-84 deficit in just four minutes.

"We didn't panic," said Tarlac. "They (Magnolia) Manners took us for granted."

Mark Telan posted another double-double of 15 points and 16 rebounds...his ninth straight this conference...while Alex Calaogan, who finished with 17 points, united Magnolia's second consecutive defeat and shift to 1-3 ratings with four game-clinching freethrows in the end.

In the other match, Willie Miller rolled 23 points and turned 14 assists while Sunny Thosa added 16 points as Alaska clamped ALEX, 100-98, to move to solo third behind idle Purefoods (10-3) and Red Bull (10-4). It was the eighth victory of the Aces in 13 games. The Express lost for the second time in a row and fell to 5-7.

Meanwhile, former FIP men's basketball coach Chot Reyes has pulled out of the commissionership race, officers-in-charge Sonny Barrios said yesterday.

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DID YOU KNOW

ON NOV. 10, 1936, Manuel L. Quezon and Sergio Osmeña took their oath as president and vice president of the newly inaugurated Philippine Commonwealth. The oath-taking was held in front of the legislative building in Manila. On the same day, Gen. Douglas MacArthur arrived to serve as military adviser to Quezon.

Cyril C. Bonalaan, Inquirer Research

Oil spill source in Munti traced

By TJ Burgonio

THE OIL SPILL REPORTED IN Muntinlupa City has been contained, but the Laguna Lake Development Authority wants an explanation from the erring companies.

"It has been contained on the mouth of the river," said LLDA General Manager Edgardo Manda, who inspected the area Monday.

Personnel from the Coast Guard and the city government used boom spills, a boom-like device that absorbs oil, to contain the spill in a creek in the Villa Colina I subdivision in Barangay Tunasan, he added.

The team collected at least 20 drums of bunker oil and water from the creek which flows into the Tunasan Canal River, a tributary of the Laguna de Bay.

The LLDA later traced the spills's drain in the factories of Alaska Milk and Universal Robina Corp. which operate lands a compound in Barangay Tunasan, according to Manda.

"We're preparing a directive ordering them to explain their failure to mitigate the oil spill. We're also holding a hearing on the spillover Friday," he said.

Depending on their findings, the LLDA may issue a cease and desist order against the two companies, he added.

The spill was the second one reported in the city in three weeks.

Last Nov. 22, used oil from a rubber plant in San Pedro, Laguna was reportedly dumped in the Tunasan's Canal's drain which spread to the Tunasan shorelines of the Laguna Lake and caused a fish kill.

Fire leaves 100 families homeless

ONE HUNDRED FAMILIES WERE LEFT homeless when a fire hit a densely populated area in Tondo, Manila at 2 a.m. yesterday.

Arson investigators said they were still trying to determine the cause of the fire that broke out on Road 10, Zaragoza Street. They suspected, however, that the blaze was probably caused by an unattended stove-like because the house where the fire started had no electricity.

Damage to property was estimated at around P200,000. Tina G. Santos

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Robbers break into glassworks shop in Quezon City

By Jeannette I. Andrade

SIX ARMED ROBBERS BROKE into an aluminum and glassworks shop in Quezon City before dawn yesterday.

They rounded Elgin Aguila, 33, and then tied up his father Dominico, owner of Aguila Glass's Glass and Aluminum Corp., and other members of the household.

Elgin, who had a deep gash on the forehead and a broken nose, was later taken to The Medical City in Pasig City.

A report from the Quezon City Police District Anonas Station 9 said that the six men, who were armed with knives and a gun, broke into the Aguilas' house on Ramiro Road in Barangay Sikatuna sometime between 5:30 a.m. and 6 a.m. yesterday.

The glass and aluminum shop is on the ground floor of the three-story building.

The Aguilas live in the upper floors.

Nolito said Elgin tried to fight off the robbers who began hitting him before he was bound along with his father and other family members.

The men then ransacked the house, taking two cellular phones, the elder Aguila's wallet which contained P8,000 and other items.

The six suspects were then separate ways after the robbery.

The Aguilas were later seated by their household who was apparently unaware that they had just been robbed.

Restoration, not demolition, says Luneta Hotel's new owner

By Allison W. Lopez

BEAUMOW HOLDINGS, THE new owner of the Luneta Hotel in Manila, yesterday announced that the 89-year-old structure would be restored to its previous glory in three years' time.

"We will make it younger. We will not touch the facade," Alvirne Wong, an engineer of the company, said.

The hotel on T. M. Kalaw Street, one of the few remaining structures that survived World War II, has been undergoing "structural rehabilitation and retrofit" since it was bought by Beaumont last August.

Completed in 1918, the Luneta Hotel was designed by Spanish architect-engineer Salvador Nieto, according to a study by Dean Arlin Joseph Fernandez of the University of Santo Tomas College of Architecture.

It is being touted as the only structure reminiscent of French Renaissance architecture with Filipino-stylized homes and is currently flying below sea level.

The dilapidated building fronting Rizal Park was declared a historical landmark by the National Historical Institute and is protected by Presidential Decree 1616, which makes it unlawful to alter or destroy the original features of an edifice classified by the NHI "without prior written permission from its chair."

Members of the Heritage Conservation Society were initially alarmed over reports that Beaumont had applied for a demolition permit but company representatives and Manila building official Melvin Balajadi assured them that the permit was issued only allows structural rehabilitation.

Vigilant

"We are vigilant when it comes to that. Mayor (Alfredo) Lim's directive is always to uphold the laws. The mayor wants to preserve historic buildings especially if there's a law that protects them," Balajadi added.

In May 2006, then Manila Mayor Lito Atienza urged the Department of Public Works and the owners of abandoned private buildings to demolish old and "dangerous" structures, including the Luneta Hotel.

At that time, the hotel was in a state of deterioration due to years of neglect that had been unchecked for a long time. There were also signs of decay, including weakened columns that could age, falling concrete planter and a nearly collapsing ground floor lanai. The basement was also flooded upon inspection. The threat to public safety especially during earthquakes, aroused Wong, was the immediate reason for the retrofit using modern technology.

For simple retrofit would mean "constructing a new structural steel framed building inside an existing building" to make it safe and sound.

Architect Dominic Galicia, HCS board member, said he was satisfied with the restrictions for the structural renovation which specified that "the existing exterior building (architectural facade) would be retained, there would be no alterations to the existing major architectural treatment and no additional floor levels shall be allowed."

Whimsical

In a 1998 article, historian columnist and HCS founding member Ambeth Ocampo described the "whimsical gargoyles in the form of lions, crocodiles, griffin and other mythical creatures that serve as decorative supports of the balcony balconies." He also talked about the "delicate filigreed railings [on the balconies] that add a touch of lightness to the solid concrete facade."

The structural renovation would be completed in a year's time said Wong, after which work on the architectural appointages would begin.

A HISTORIC historical landmark, the Luneta Hotel near Rizal Park is undergoing structural rehabilitation according to the company that bought it.

Sumilao farmers' plaint: The bigger picture

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

THE HACIENDA farmers who are now in Manila after marching 1,700 kilometers are getting a lot of sympathy from the public because their cause is supported by some members of the Catholic Church.

The farmers want 144 hectares of land, once owned by the Quezonbridge, to be given to them under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

This columnist subscribes to the advocacy of the late President Ramon Magsaysay that "those who have less in life should have more in law."

Between the rich and the poor in the Philippines, I will always side with the latter. I have helped many aggrieved poor people get justice.

But this time, I am siding with San Miguel Corp., not the farmers from Sumilao. Let me tell you why.

About three years ago, long before the current controversy, I had a conversation over dinner with Ramon Ang, president of San Miguel Corp.

Ang was babbling with enthusiasm about helping poor farmers get a better deal for corn. The price of their produce fluctuates depending on the season.

The businessman told (that SMC, upon the invitation of the Gumbas municipal government, would set up post-harvest facilities to stabilize the price of corn.

The facilities would be the first in a planned integrated agro-industrial complex for Bataan that would include food mills, farms for piggery and poultry ventures with a treatment plant for waste from the farms and a plan to grow thousands of trees by the river bank.

The SMC head said his company's Sumilao experiment would be duplicated in other parts of the country if it succeeded, to help other farmers.

"It's San Miguel's way of giving back to the people who have made the firm what it is now," Ang said.

Ang, a former auto mechanic, said helping the poor was an "uplifting experience."

When I read his letter to the Inquirer's Letters section Monday commenting on Fr. Joaquin Bernas' column taking up the cudgels for the Bataan farmers, I knew Ang was sincere about what he said.

What he said in reply to Bernas was exactly what he told me three years ago.

* * *

The farmers' fight for the ownership of a piece of land in Sumilao will benefit only themselves. In terms of a bigger economic picture, the town, and even the entire country, will benefit from SMC's plan for Sumilao.

The WORLD

Elinor Lenaerts B. Gacoo

Al-Qaida claims deadly Algiers blasts

THE flag of the United Nations is worn at half- as rescuers work at the site of a bomb blast near UN offices in Algiers on Tuesday. Dec. 11. At least 12 UN staff members were still missing. –

ALGIERS—AL-QAIDA CLAIMED responsibility for a double car bomb strike in Algiers that killed dozens of people as rescuers continued to work on Wednesday to find survivors.

Amid a disputed death toll, rescuers pulled seven people alive from the debris of one of the buildings which was brought the offices of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other UN agencies, Algerian radio reported.

The second attack killed and maimed students packed in a bus passing a car as it was devastated outside the country's highest court in central Algiers.

The government said 26 people were killed and 177 wounded by the two bombs. Hospital sources gave a toll of 62 dead and about 100 injured.

The United Nations said at least 13 of its staff were killed and several more were still unaccounted for after the attacks as rescuers, aided by sniffer dogs, tried to locate injured survivors among the debris.

Stunned families gathered nearby anxiously awaiting news of missing relatives.

One woman, dressed and dumped toward the ground after hearing her son was among the dead, said authorities quickly led her away.

Al-Qaida's branch in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claimed responsibility for the bombs in a statement published on an Islamist website, the authenticity of which could not be immediately verified.

"We are announcing the good news to the Muslim nation," read the statement, alongside photographs it said were the two suicide bombers, named as Abdel Rahmane al-Nasiri and Ayoub Ibrahim Abou Othmane, carrying assault rifles.

It hailed "the success of the two martyr operations carried out by ... two heroes in Algiers to defend the nation of Islam and to humiliate the crusaders and their agents, the slaves of the United States and the sons of France." The statement said the double bombings "debunked the myth that the security of our group has been destroyed." "This attack reminds the crusaders who are occupying our land and who pillage our wealth of the necessity of paying heed to the demands and addresses of our sheikh and emir Osama bin Laden, God protect him."

The group threatened new attacks. "The mujahideen (fighters) of the Maghreb are volunteering for more martyrdom attacks which will continue until all the lands of Islam are freed ..."

Meanwhile, Algerian Prime Minister Abdelaziz Belkhadem insisted on national television that "the cowardly attack" would not have nothing to hide and every drop of Algerian blood counts for us."

It was the latest of a series of bombings in the capital and other major Algerian cities this year that have killed about 100 people. Al-Qaida have claimed responsibility for all of them.

Oil chief Bon Ki-moon led international outrage over the attacks. He condemned "in the strongest possible terms the terrorist attacks in Algiers," his office said in a statement.

The United States called down acts of "senseless violence." "We condemn this attack on the United Nations office by those enemies of humanity who attack the innocent," said a White House statement.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who made a state visit to Algeria last week, denounced what he called "barbaric, hateful and deeply cowardly acts." AFP

US ice storm leaves 24 dead in Midwest

ERIC MORRIS, IOWA—AN ICY winter storm blamed for at least 24 deaths in the Midwest continued to wreak havoc, shutting down Iowa's biggest airport, delaying flights in Chicago and leaving hundreds of thousands without power.

President George W. Bush declared an emergency in Oklahoma on Tuesday, ordering federal aid to supplement state and local response efforts.

Some officials in Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma had already made similar emergency declarations after ice, some as much as 2.5 cm thick, accumulated on trees, power lines, streets and windshields on Monday.

About 2.5 cm of ice was expected on Tuesday over parts of Iowa, followed by up to 12.7 cm of sleet and snow. "It's a pretty good ice-maker," said Frank Bolen, a National Weather Service forecaster.

About a million customers in the Midwest, including nearly 860,000 Oklahoma homes and businesses, still had no electricity on Tuesday, and Iowa's largest energy supplier cited the weight of ice and falling branches causing the biggest power outage in state history. AP

Gas cut targets too ambitious, says UN chief

BALI—IN THE MIDST OF UN DIplomacy, the UN chief said on Wednesday guidelines on greenhouse gas emissions cuts favored by Europe and developing countries may be "too ambitious" to include in a final statement on climate change.

Drafts of a final statement at a UN global warming conference this week have included a call for industrialized countries to consider cutting emissions blamed for rising temperatures by between 25 percent and 40 percent by 2020.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, however, said such goals might have to wait for subsequent negotiations when richer countries have considered options by the United States, though at some point targets for emission cuts would be necessary.

"Emotionally it may be too ambitious" to set guidelines now, Ban told reporters, while urging Washington to be flexible. Later he added: "Practically speaking, this will have to be negotiated down the road."

The two-week conference, which wraps up Friday, brings together delegates from nearly 190 nations, charged with launching negotiations that will lead to an international accord to succeed the Kyoto Protocol in 2012.

Talks picked up pace on Wednesday with the arrival of ministers and heads of state who urged the world in a series of speeches to quickly impose deep cuts in emissions or head off world predictions of rising seas, worsening droughts and famines.

BAN

and racing to chaos.

The European Union said its unilateral nations strongly favor specific target ranges for emissions, which they say are needed to avoid temperatures rising above 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels.

The United States, however, has signed enormously at Bali that including such language in the final document would prejudice negotiations over the next two years.

"The reality in this business is that more members appear in the text, it prejudges the outcome and will restrict or drive the negotiations in one direction," said Harlan Watson, a lead US negotiator.

Many negotiators at Bali have said that a top priority was getting an agreement that the United States could work with, but Greens Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel... urban governments has pledged to cut emissions by 40 percent by 2020—said the Bali conference would be meaningless without targets. AP

WORLD BRIEFS

Triple car bombs

BAGHDAD—Dozens of people were killed and more than 100 wounded when three car bombs exploded in quick succession in a southern Iraqi Shiite city of Karbala on Wednesday, police and hospital officials said. A doctor at the emergency unit of the biggest hospital in Karbala said 26 bodies and 100 wounded had been brought in. The bombs exploded during a mass arrest in the city. Reuters

Macau corruption trial

HONG KONG—Macau's biggest ever corruption trial ended on Wednesday with prosecutors calling for a guilty verdict for a former top government minister accused of taking tens of millions of dollars in kickbacks in the southern Chinese gambling enclave. Ao Man-long, a former transport and public works secretary, was arrested a year ago and faced 16 counts of taking bribes, laundering money and abusing power to help property developers win lucrative construction tenders. AP

Apartment fire deaths

BEIJING—A fire tore through an apartment building in eastern China early Wednesday, killing at least 21 people and injuring two others, the official Xinhua News Agency said. Some 310 people were rescued after the blaze broke out around 4:35 a.m. in the Wanfu Mansion in Wenzhou, a city in Zhejiang province, Xinhua said, citing fire officials. Twelve more died from burns and smoke inhalation, Xinhua said. AP

Las Vegas shooting

LAS VEGAS—Residents told police young people at a school bus stop, wounding two critically, in a midday attack that followed a fight over a girl, authorities said. School police arrested three teenagers in the fight that happened hours before the shooting on Tuesday. Sheriff Doug Gillespie said investigators were still seeking two gunmen, who were believed to have fled on foot from the scene of the shooting. AP

CIA director distances self from videotapes

WASHINGTON—(2ND MEDIR). V Hayden, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, distanced himself on Tuesday from the decision to record and subsequently destroy hundreds of hours of video taken during the interrogation of senior Qaeda captives.

Speaking to public after delivering classified testimony before a Senate committee, Hayden said that the decision to record the interrogations in 2002 was made under George J. Tenet, then the director of central intelligence, and that the destruction of those tapes in 2005 came under the watch of former J. Goss, who succeeded Tenet.

"There are other people in the agency who know about this far better than I," Hayden said after he confirmed before the Senate Intelligence Committee. He had become the agency director in May 2006, six months after intelligence officials here said the tapes were destroyed.

Congressional officials said Tuesday that they would like to hear from Hayden and Tenet before the committee as part of its normal probe.

In a statement to agency employees last Thursday, Hayden indicated that he supported the decision to destroy the videos. He did say evidence that support in his public statement Thursday, although he did not say the decision was wrong.

Congressional officials said that Hayden cited to provide a timeline of events surrounding the destruction of the tapes due he had constructed from agency records. New York Times News Service

Canada serial killer sentenced to life

VANCOUVER—CONVICTED mass murderer Robert "Willy" Pickton was sentenced by a Canadian court on Tuesday to life in prison, with a chance of parole after serving 25 years.

A jury found Pickton, 58, guilty on six counts of second-degree murder last day. He faced a second trial next year on another 20 charges of murdering women at his Pacific Coast city.

Prosecutors on the first trial said Pickton had picked up prostitutes from Vancouver's squalid Downtown Eastside, killed them, butchered them and disposed of their bodies by feeding them to pigs or taking them to a rendering plant.

Pickton was convicted after the judge in sentence Pickton to the maximum 25 years in jail before possible parole. "The court took deputy of the circumstances are unique," said prosecutor Geoff Stranges.

"The evil of Pickton is all," says a consideration, in his views unwavering and added, "There is no evidence of remorse." The defense had asked for leniency, citing Pickton's acceptance of 10 to 20 years.

Judge James Williams pegged Pickton's sentencing starting in 2002, when he was first arrested for the murders. He pocketmarks in the murderers under Canadian law. AFP

Republic of the Philippines
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
SEC Building, EDSA, Greenhills
Mandaluyong City

SEC Memorandum Circular No. 8
Series of 2007

To: ALL CONCERNED
Subject: Definition of Qualified Buyers under Section 10 of the Securities Regulation Code

Pursuant to its authority under Section 10.1 (l)(iv) of the Securities Regulation Code, the Securities and Exchange Commission (the "Commission"), in its meeting on December 4, 2007, resolved to issue the following rules on the determination of a "qualified buyer."

Section 1. A "qualified institutional buyer" shall be a natural person who, at the time of his or her registration with a Self Regulatory Organization, or such other entities that the Commission may authorize to make the registration, possesses the following qualifications:

(a) Has a minimum annual gross income of Twenty Five Million Pesos (PhP25,000,000) for the last two years prior to registration, or a total portfolio investment in securities registered with the Commission of at least Ten Million pesos (PhP10,000,000), or a personal net worth of not less than Thirty Million Pesos (PhP30,000,000);

AND

(b) Has been engaged in securities trading, in his personal capacity or through a fund manager, for a period of one year, or held for at least two years a position of responsibility in any professional or business entity that requires knowledge or expertise in securities trading, such as, legal consultant, financial adviser, sales person or associated person of a broker-dealer, or finance, treasury or trust officer of a bank or other executive positions with related responsibilities.

Section 2. A juridical person shall be considered a "qualified institutional buyer" if it possesses any of the following qualifications at the time of its registration in the same manner described above;

(a) Has a minimum annual gross income of at least One Hundred Million Pesos (PhP100,000,000) for at least two years prior to registration;

(b) A total portfolio investment in securities registered with the Commission of at least Sixty Million Pesos (PhP60,000,000);

(c) A net worth of not less than One Hundred Million (PhP100,000,000).

Section 3. All applications for registration as "qualified buyer" shall be accompanied by the following documents:

(a) Signed Information Sheet (see Annex 1 for Qualified Individual Buyers and Annex 2 for Qualified Institutional Buyers);

(b) Proof of the applicant's qualifications; and

(c) Copies of income tax returns for the preceding two years, as filed and stamped "received" by the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

Section 4. The registration shall be valid for two years, provided that any application for renewal should be accompanied by a favorable record investigation of the authorized registrar and shall be subject to the approval of the Commission.

Section 5. The registry book of the authorized registrants shall at all times be open for review or inspection by the Commission.

Section 6. No securities purchased by "qualified buyers" shall be assigned, transferred or sold to non-qualified investors.

Section 7. This Memorandum Circular shall take effect on January 15, 2008.

December 10, 2007, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila

(Sgd.) **Fe B. Barin**
Chairperson

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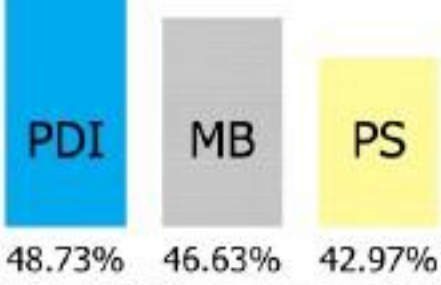

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SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Molmisores Assistant Editor Francis T. J. Ochoa

■ **Alcano** rules 8-ball, matches Amit's feat /A24

Lean day drops RP bets to 6th

Albania survives Thai juggernaut in boxing

By Ernesto A. Gonzales
Sports Features Editor

HARBIN, SOUTHERN MANCHURIA—ANDRE ALBANIA, RIORE TRIGUERO the expected Thailand juggernaut in boxing and Ronnie Alcanov upheld the country's lofty status in billiards Wednesday as the Philippines scrounged for golds from all likely sources but still fell in ninth place overall in the 24th Southeast Asian Games here.

Sheila Mae Perez delivered from the diving platform as expected while Amaya Sta. nailed a second gold in archery by powering the women's compound team over an Indochina squad to give the defending overall champion Filipinos 33 gold medals with two full days of competition left in the 11-nation meet.

The Filipinos clinched the second basketball crown with one game left to play the two softball squads stood just a victory away from retaining their titles and Gold Manalo forged another showdown against Thai Ounai Udomsuk for the men's singles plum tomorrow.

But the FilAm wishbone together failed to settle for the bronze medal, their last hope for the gold shattered by the unforgiving stick defending champion Philippines, who evaded to a 74-56 win and a showdown for the 6-th with Thailand.

Hosted by an 11-gold campaign for the dog Malaysia moved up to third overall with 42 medalists, sweeping past Singapore which slid to fourth with 39 wins, and Indonesia inched ahead of the Philippines with 37 golds after a harvest of 12 Wednesday.

Thailand still emerged the most productive nation with 20 wins that earned it within three golds of matching its total target of 130. Vietnam was a hopelessly outclassed second with 97.

Albania pulled off the lone knockout win for the day to retain her women's fly-weight title over Hanae Kadowaraj, but her five other teammates proved easy preys for their respective Thai rivals.

Albania smashed Kanrawaya to the canvas for good with an overhand right to the face. The referee summarily cut the Thai with 30 seconds gone in the first round.

It was the lone break in an all-Thailand show of ring superiority, leaving light flyweight Alice Kate Sparit, light bantam Jonalise Gras, bantam Jennifer Chilem, feather Rosjane Bella and light Michel Dumiano with silvers.

In fairness to the Thais, they were without explaining their intense homework bias—although there were some offsetting lapses—and the seven Filipino fighters going up against the hosts in the all-rain finals Thursday can more or less expect to get a fair shake if they perform well.

The lanky Alcanov, who broke into prominence by winning the World Pool 9-ball title last year, captured the men's 9-ball singles gold with a resounding 9-6 win over Singapore's Ooon Kiat Tey, 9-6.

It was the second gold for the billiards men after Baldwin Antiporda's victory in the women's 8-ball singles although the country's cue ladies are still failed to keep her 8-ball crown on Tuesday and teamed up with Jana Chrome.

Alcanov, who won three golds in Manila two years ago, defended her women's 3-3 meet springboard crown over Hakuman Leong Mun Yee while the individual winner of the event, boosted his gold standup with Jennifer Chua and Abbigail Tuchaguin in the women's compound team gold.

The Thailand-Center Philippine five outplayed Malaysia, 100-60, and join the gold away with its third straight win under the single-round format since Thailand, its final foe on Thursday, already has two losses.

Montilla, beaten by Udomchoke in the singles of the team event last Friday, gained another shot at the Thai No. 1 after avenging Fly-fan Tan of Vietnam in the semifinals, 6-0, 6-2.

Udomchoke outed Elbert Ilo of Indonesia, 6-4, 6-0, after eliminating Hi-Jun Eric Salas, 6-2, 7-6, in the quarterfinals.

The golden promise in golf disappeared with the defending champion men's team falling be-

KINGS AGAIN: The Philippine basketball team huddles during a timeout in their game against Malaysia. The Filipinos scored a resounding triumph to virtually clinch the Southeast Asian Games gold medal in the men's basketball event. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MILO Official Energy Drink of the Philippine Team

SEA GAMES Medal Tally

Country	G	S	B
Malaysia	42	36	32
Indonesia	37	42	50
Singapore	39	35	37
Thailand	33	33	33
Philippines	33	41	36
Vietnam	17	32	48
Myanmar	1	14	16
Laos	1	2	23
Cambodia	1	3	8
Brunei	1	1	4
Timor-Leste	0	0	0

hind by 19 strokes after three rounds and the women stayed sleeping to second, three shots off the Thais.

With all four players signing par, the Petro Cup champion Thais posted a 420 total against the 449 of the Filipinos, who nailed the second-running Malaysians by three strokes and Indonesia by two.

The female golfers still have a shot at first place, however, when Anna Tangpuz-Jose's shot of individual leader P Bangkaphan of Thailand with a 3-under 141 and their team only three down at 289.

Touted as a major gold contributor, taekwondo could produce only two silver medals for the day courtesy of Mario Antonio Rivera and Alex Briones.

Rivera, who came in the tournament after securing an Olympic

(SEE BAD #2)

Filipino officials mulling pullout

HARBIN, SOUTHERN MANCHURIA—Certain officials of Team Philippines suspect that Thailand is resorting to dirty tactics to hamper the Philippines' objective sports in the 24th SEA Games go in its favor.

Complaints over alleged biased judging and meeting in such events as judo, karate-do, taekwondo and boxing have reportedly prompted the officials to consider pulling their athletes out of their respective events.

"Bahkan siya nila sa [they're wasting us here in] Thailand," said Richard Ing, Philippine Pentathlon Association chief of mission.

A meeting among the officials was scheduled later Wednesday.

"We will discuss all our options," said another delegation member. "The primary option is to walk out of the events or boycott them completely."

After watching four female boxers lose on points in the finals Wednesday, Pantaleon de said he would call for a meeting of the country's delegation officials

ISN'T IT COMFORTING TO KNOW THAT YOU'RE NOT ALONE IN YOUR QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE?

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SEAG medalists to get extra bonus

[illegible] athletes in the 24th Southeast Asian Games will get an extra bonus for [illegible] Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose Cojuangco Jr. said this Tuesday.

"I have been informed by Malacañang that President Arroyo will give all of our Southeast Asian Games medalists bonuses, regardless whether they win the gold, silver or bronze," said Cojuangco.

"However, I was not informed how much they will get," Cojuangco added. "But this should be a welcome development for our athletes."

He pointed out that the cash gifts were on top of the regular incentives given by the government through the Philippine Sports Commission for SEAG medalists.

Under the scheme, an individual gold medalist gets P150,000, the silver is worth P100,000 and the bronze P50,000.

THE PHILIPPINES' Nona Ma. Crisanta (left) lunches a kick against Vietnam's Bui Thi Nhot in the women's +67kg taekwondo in the 24th Southeast Asian Games in Thailand.

RP five rips Malaysia, puts hoop title in bag

[illegible]

By Manong R. Castillo

NAKHON RATCHASIMA—SHOWING SIGNS unnerved for much a frustrated side, the Philippine men's team played without letup and swamped Malaysia, 106-60, Wednesday night to the first of two games the Filipinos need to win to formally nab the 24th Southeast Asian Games basketball tournament.

Al Vergara scored 14 points and led six others in twin-digit as the Filipinos stunned but not doubled up on the Malaysians at the end of the third to post win No. 3 in the same outpowering style that reaffirmed their lofty status in the region.

The title win—the ninth golden finish by the Philippines since it dominated Indonesia, 71-49, on Tuesday last the Filipinos still need to come out against the Thais Thursday and would not even need a win to bag the gold if the only matters back home.

As things stand, the Filipinos can still raise the gold medal even if they lose by 25 points to the Thais since that would give them a 2-1 card, tied with the Indonesians, whom they topped apart by 26.

The Filipinos, seeking to win an eighth straight gold medal in this event, have now won their three games by an average of nearly 43 points with host Thailand (the only one standing in the way—if that can even be said).

Coho Norwood, the 6ft. American leader of the team, didn't even have to push himself, sinking just one field goal attempt—and making it—to finish with only two points, the least their among 12 team-mates.

"The team is very well motivated," Bacud said after savoring on the threshold of his first SEAG crown as a coach.

"We spent more than P50 million preparing this team since the Manila, but this gold just made it worth all that amount," said Barbosa. Center Marc Hotmen, the sage delegation head who funded the Philippine team's rudy days prior.

Norwood, though, made contributions in other departments as he wound up with five rebounds, six assists and two steals in less than 20 minutes on the floor.

Jeff Chan and Allan Salangsang had 12 points each, Jason Ibeza and Chad Alonso chipped in 11 each and Mahkmud Hutsenian Andrew Bonleon Pascual and reigning UAAP MVP Jerry Cruz contributed 10 each.

Malaysia was out of it right in the first quarter as it trailed by 16 before the Filipinos turned up the heat some more at the Rachapinthi Stadium here and end of the third period with an 80-43 lead.

The RP women's team went out of the tournament in a lead way losing ingredibly to Malaysia, 86-74, for a 1-2 card that meant another failed attempt to win in terms for the first time in its SEAG participation.

Held to just six points in the first period to trail by nine, the Filipinos didn't show the need to mount a comeback and steadily drifted back.

The Thais and the Malaysians dispute the women's title Thursday at 5 p.m. (6 p.m. Manila time) shortly after the RP men's team tries to close out the country's robin tournament unscathed also against Thailand at 3 p.m.

The scores:

Women's Game

MALAYSIA (86)—Jose 16, Ajee 14, Aziz 13, Tan K. Hui 7, Yeoh 7, Lim 6, Wei C. Ho 2.

PHILIPPINES (74)—Angeles 13, Dela Cruz 12, Tenorio 7, Jamero 5, Argao, Sison 5, Ramirez 2, Lim 2, Arriola 2, Mabayo 2.

Quarters: 19-12, 28-33, 57-50, 79-74

Men's Game

PHILIPPINES (106)—Vergara 14, Chan 12, Salangsang 12, Ibeza 11, Alonso 11, Fernandez 10, Cruz 10, Castro 9, Mendoza, Sta. Rodriguez 6, Norwood 5.

MALAYSIA (60)—Hue Yi Hwang 16, Lee K. Hoh 7, Bala, Lim, Tan C. Keng 5, Abdul Kadir 4, Ali 4.

Quarters: 30-14, 52-32, 80-43, 106-60

Lean day drops...

From page A12

nine last records in Montano, Mine four led for a third straight Games' gold, losing to Thailand's Gowon Da Silva, 3-4, in the under-67-kg final.

Montano, who was told Rivero to the Vietnam Olympic qualifier bound to Vietnam's Nguyen Thuy Hang, 7-4, in the under-64-kg division.

Aside from the five runners-up finishes in boxing, three other silvers came from Hurd Espinosa in the individual men's keirin in taekwondo, Marilyn Hinolan in the under-60kg in pencak silat and in the men's 10-crew 1,000-metre event in traditional boat racing.

The two female beach volley pairs—Heidi Rusio-Diane Pateno and Michelle Laborte-Michelle Carolino—advanced to the quarterfinals and the Filipinos remained on course in their bid to bring to shelter basketball crown.

But the medal-starved hordes in Bangkok continued to struggle with fifteen fifteen counting HPC in the men's Masters qualifying with 1661 pts followed by Hazel Mamuda with 1636. Lito Clemente was also fifth in the women's Masters with 1614.

Rusty Ong of Singapore paced the men's division with 1619 while Sharon Koh led the women's section with 1606.

IN THE FINALS The Philippines' Dunna Calapatan performs in the rope competition of women's rhythmic gymnastics Wednesday at the 24th Southeast Asian Games. Calapatan made it to the medal round.

Singson sets sights on SEAG vindication

NAKHON RATCHASIMA—Esther Marie Singson is out for Southeast Asian Games redemption and the only way to do it is to win her event in the biennial meet's 24th edition.

"If at first motivation just isn't enough, I'll make sure I'll be so to win in this SEA Games," she said Wednesday at the RP taekwondo jins geared for battle.

The five-foot-three Singson is entered sures in the under-[illegible] class, the same event she topped two years ago in Manila.

But a mandatory drug test days after the event showed banned substance in her urine. The result was overturned and her gold taken away.

Singson said the substance came from a slimming tea she drank to keep her weight down. Representations by her and the sport's officials were of no use.

Claim from refugee camp: I really wanted to quit [illegible] ayaw nila [illegible] Singson. "Pero para ng mga kasbigan, para ng mama ko, na nalay ko lang dito ng mga friends, and even my mother, advised me not to."

Singson argued her RP Team's ide by emerging as the first player of Sir Carlos Palanca Jr. championship held in early 2006. She then secured her slot here by winning the gold to the Busan championships in Pang Tau, Vietnam last October.

Beach volley tandems enter knockout stage

By Manong R. Castillo

NAKHON RATCHASIMA—THE PHILIPPINES' pair two teams into the knockout phase of the women's beach volleyball events in the 24th Southeast Asian Games with Stella Pateno and Heidi Rusio nailing the No. 2 slot in Pool B.

Michelle Laborte and Michelle Carolino were the No. 4 qualifiers in Pool A as Thailand topped both groups and could set a revenge as all-Thai match for the gold medal.

There were actually four encounters which accepted the eight total slots in the KO phase, with Malaysia and Indonesia the other two.

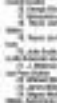
Pateno-Rusio, which is being hosted for the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, finished with a 4-1 record, while Carolino-Laborte wound up with a 2-3 slate.

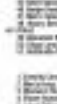
Carolino-Laborte, being the final Pool A qualifier, drew the strongest team from Pool B in a quarterfinal foe, the Supa Phokaeggkeyo-Lalee Kamkhip team that went unbeaten in five classification matches to face other Thai team.

Pateno-Rusio slugs it out with the Incora Rahmawati-Febbrih Rapanjang squad from Indonesia with a win putting the Filipinos into a semifinal confrontation with the Tengkuhaw Uni-Santrok Antinee squad from Thailand.

Uni-Antinee will clash with the Malaysian pair of Teng Kee Lah and Lee Ai Mun-Khairiri, the No. 4 Pool B qualifier, at 2 p.m. (3 p.m. Manila time) Thursday as the Ide Majesty the King's 80th Birthday Anniversary tourn here.

Filipino medalists (As of Dec. 12, 2007)





Three-gold sweep within grasp in softball, baseball

By Ernesto A. Gonzales

SAILOM MOUSAMMA—THE two golds in softball lay just a game victory each while the baseball photo was just two victories from the group of the Philippines on Wednesday at the 24th Southeast Asian Games here.

The RP Blu Girls blanked Singapore, 7-0, in the semifinals at the Makhosot Buakaew Baseball Softball University football field and they will likely meet the same team again for the gold medal under the page system on Thursday.

Same situation

That's the same situation for the Blu Boys, who turned back Indonesia, 3-1, to reach the final where they are expected to meet the same Indons under the same format.

Both defending champion teams are undefeated so far with the Blu Girls on a four-game streak and the Blu Boys on a five-game roll although they needed to score a run each in the last three innings to down the Indonesians Thursday.

Meanwhile, the baseball squad finally gave up a run before pulling away to a 6-1 victory over Burma (Myanmar) at the Queen Sirikit Sports Center in Bangkok.

Third straight win

From a 5-1 tie after the first inning, the Filipinos stormed to a 11-1 lead after the fifth before adding another run in the sixth to seal their third straight victory.

Thailand later showed its true potential by overwhelming Malaysia, 24-0, in five innings to grab the lead with a 4-0 slate in the six-team field playing a single round robin to decide the title.

Capping the onslaught with an 18-run fourth inning, the Thais came close to matching the tournament's most lopsided win, a 37-1 rout scored by Indonesia against Cambodia last Sunday while improving on the 21-0 victory by the Filipinos over Malaysia last Friday.

Realistic chance

The Thais, the only team with a realistic chance to dethrone the Filipinos after beating them in the Asian Games last year, take a rest Thursday while the defending champions meet the Indonesians in a bid to forge a winner-take-all showdown with the hosts on Friday.

Plucky Perez plucks first diving gold

GHISLA Mae Perez performs during the women's 1-meter springboard diving final at the Aquatic Center in Hukhot Barthadma. The defending champion Perez blew the field out of the water with an impressive 116-point victory.

By Marvin R. Cunilla

NAKHON RATCHASIMA—GHISLA MAE PEREZ, THE Philippines' diving treasure, ruled the women's 3-meter springboard at the 24th Southeast Asian Games here with ease.

Perez accumulated top spot right after her first dive, staying there until the end to score a total of 330.60 points and win her fourth (GSEA) gold medal.

The 20-year-old from Davao, who has been handled by a Chinese coach since October, drew virtually unchallenged all day, repeating as champion by close to 14 points over Khor Tze Leong of Malaysia, the Asian Games bronze medalist who could only total 306.90.

"She is very confident coming over here," outrunning association president Mark Joseph and after the first day of competition at His Majesty the King's 80th Birth Anniversary complex here.

Thanh Tra Hoang was third with a 300.60, while Sharron Lemoy the second Filipina in the nine-strong field, was eighth with 223.65 points.

Perez, who is seeking a possible spot in next year's Beijing Olympics, will also gun for golden supremacy in the 1m springboard and women's 3m synchronized springboard events in the last two days of the diving competition.

Coach Domenico warmed up with Perez for the synchronized gold in the 2005 Games.

Actually Perez will leave for Guri, China, after the Games to train for her stint in a diving Grand Prix in Beijing, which will be the final qualifier for the Summer Games.

Perez was the only one in Philippine's field to get a score of an high at 8.5 in almost all of her dives.

BECAUSE he lost to Omar Udomchoke in the men's event, Cecil Mamiit (above) goes into the final against the Thai as the underdog.

Mamiit sews up titanic clash with Udomchoke

By Marvin R. Cunilla

NAKHON RATCHASIMA—CECIL MAMIIT wasted payback against the man who snatched the gold medal off the Filipinos' necks in the team event. That set Jamal Udomchoke wanted revenge for a loss a little farther back in time.

They both earned a shot at their tribute on Wednesday, logging a victory singles duel for the gold at the 24th Southeast Asian Games at His Majesty the King's 60th Anniversary courts here.

Mamiit, the Filipino forebear, booked a slot in the finals after easily eliminating Nyuan Soi of Cambodia, 6-0, 6-2, in the semifinals.

Mamiit will be gunning to defend the crown he won in Manila, a victory Udomchoke hasn't forgotten. The Thai superstar was on the other end of the score when Mamiit danced his way to the gold in 2005.

Udomchoke, who said that winning the gold here would be sweeter if he did so at the expense of Mamiit, ousted Indonesia's Ellyas Ini, 6-4, 6-0.

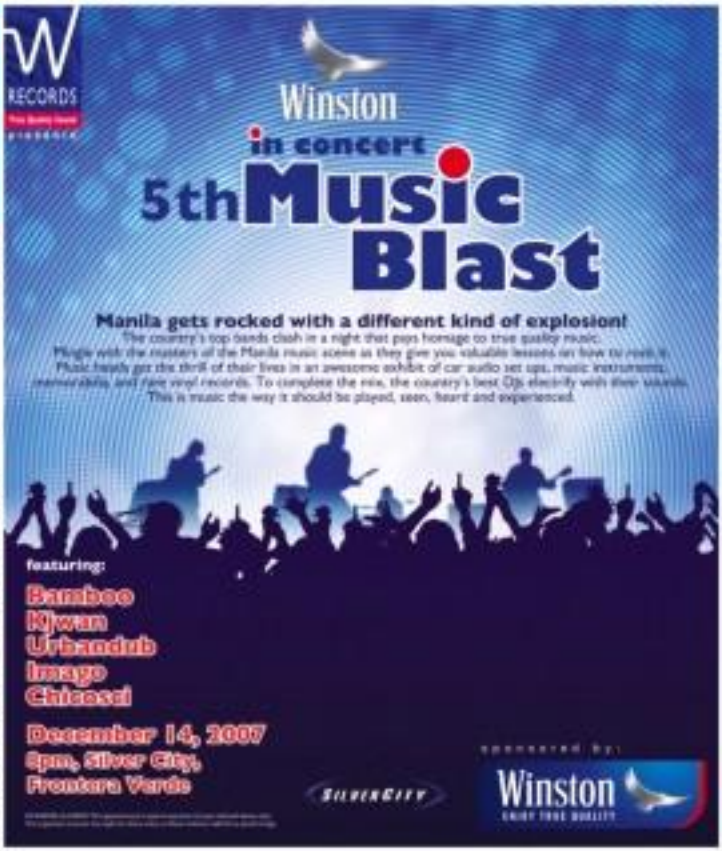
The 33-year-old Mamiit had earlier lost to Udomchoke here, 6-4, 6-4, during the team competition eventually won by Thailand.

And to avenge that loss, Mamiit will have to play a lot harder than he did in Manila in 2005, when he won in straight sets.

Thailand has been pushing Udomchoke extra hard with the country's sports authority even putting up a professional tournament in Bangkok a week before the start of the Games to get his team in tip-top shape.

Mamiit's partnership with Dennis Uy, meanwhile, banged into the semifinals of the mixed doubles event after a 6-3, 7-5 pasting Malaysia's Adam Jaya and Jessamiah Nooridin.

Eric Taino-Hans Mattai also moved into the Final Four and would make it an all-Filipino clash for the gold after a marathon 6-2, 4-6, 10-8 victory over the Indonesian pair of Saswandi Sawandi and Angelique Widjaja.



Government Warning:
Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.

THE Philippine swim team's fantastic four: (from left) Daniel Coakley, James Walsh, Miguel Molina and Ryan Arabejo.

Joseph reveals swim team's secrets

By Marc Anthony Reyes

AQUATICS CHIEF MARK JOSEPH YUDE-han bared the secrets of the country's success when Filipino eight gold medals from the swimming pools in the Southeast Asian Games, their best effort in 16 years.

First, he said, was a solid program. And then, he added, there was that "family" atmosphere within the team.

Joseph and fellow Olympians Ricky Bruno, Jed Rosario and Akiko Thomson-assumed powers in the Philippine Amateur Swimming Association four years ago, amid a turbulent power struggle and immediately started implementing drastic reforms to improve the sport.

"What this SEAG should make apparent is the swimming community in the Philippines is that we have a program," said Joseph in a text message from Thailand, where the country's divers are still seeking action.

He said there is now "a clear pathway for swimmers to get to the United States for training, and a few will be like Miguel [Molina], Ryan [Arabejo] and Daniel [Coakley]."

Molina won three individual golds (400m and 200m individual medley and 200m breaststroke), while Arabejo garnered two (200m freestyle and 1,500m free). Coakley clinched the 50m free via a new SEAG record, while 16-Welsh-mated the 800m butterfly leg-pulled to they nailed the 400m 200 relay.

It was the best RP performance since the 10-gold output of Eric Buhain-led squad in the 1991 SEA Games in Manila. It also well surpassed the three gold haul of the country in the 2005 Philippine edition.

"Our team and the coaches and all parents were helping one another just like one family," he said. "This is a very phenomenon for swimming, it may sound simplistic but it's the truth."

Thais too good for RP, scoop six boxing golds

By Recah Trinidad

ALBANIA

NAKHON RATCHASIMA—ITS weight Nonito Albania demolished Thailand's Hanna Kiadwoeang in the third round but her bout gold medal victory for RP failed to raise the clear superiority established by the boxers over their Filipino rivals at the start of the two-day boxing finals yesterday.

The 48 women's class, which were four gold medals to present RP to the boxing championship in the 2003 Southeast Asian Games, was overpowered by a younger but determined Thai team that grabbed a total of six gold medals against only one by the Philippines.

There were small discrepancies in scoring as boxers from both countries agreed off in a total of six gold medal bouts but, on the whole, Thailand provided pelting many because it fielded the better fighters.

Light flyweight Mior Kate Aguasi was clearly outboxed by bigger op-

[illegible] 19-6, light bantam Mitti Nitta Lim Cruz was no match against the tall, sharp Chanakorn Thanrin remembering, 10-8 and bantam Jen valen Chiten was outclagged by Tanmolee Thongsaen, 17-12, before the final two hours of the Thai-RP showdown emphasized the hosts' superiority.

Featherweight Rosjun Sella was shut out by Pornmilai Laokwan, 30-0, while debunding lightweight champion Michel Martinez, favored against her 17-year-old opponent, failed tapally and was outpounded, 22-11, by Jeanitta Nguhongsawan.

A disgusted Manny Lopez, president of the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines, protested the manner his women fighters had lost to the hosts.

"The honor of the country should prevail above everything, they should not dishonor us by giving us one-sided decisions," lopez told SBN-4 boxing commissioner Jun Jun Reyes after the fights at the Maneuvering Municipal Gymnasium.

"I would not be part of this comic show in Thailand," Lopez added.

The Thais claimed a sixth gold when gameright Diamonbai Sigsan late delivered her Vietnamese foe.

The closing round in boxing will be held today with all seven Filipino fighters figuring in gold-medal bouts against Thai rivals.

RP will be seen a total of eight gold medals—four each by the women and men's team—in the 2005 SEA Games championship in Ratchaburi City, will need to sweep the remaining bouts against awesome Thai foes to have a shot at the boxing championship.

Based on the medal tap of the SF and Thai squads, Filipino boxing officials here may have to invent a better alibi for the expected results.

SALVATION for the Philippine team comes via a racking right cross from Annie Albania that sends Thai foe Hanna Kiadwoeang to the floor.

'Toothless' Alcano bares bite, rules 8-ball final

By Manong R. Castillo

RONNIE Alcano completes his billiards mission, plucking the 8-ball gold medal into the Philippine rollers.

NAKHON RATCHASIMA—RONNIE ALCANO broke out of a tight match with longshot Chinn Kin Teyvel Singapore on Wednesday to post a 9-6 victory and bag the 8-ball men's singles gold medal in the 24th Southeast Asian Games at the Sima Thani Hall here.

The swashbuckling Alcano, the reigning world 8-ball champion, came out of a 6-6 score and won the final three racks of the all-or-nothing bout to gift the Philippines with its second gold in billiards counting Ruben Antiporda's victory over the weekend.

It was actually the second tough match that the 30-year-old Alcano had to win after he escaped past World Nine-Ball Championship veteran Ibrahim Ilie Isnin of Malaysia, 9-8, in the 9-ball Final Four Tuesday night.

His three wins the hours after a 9-8 victory over Dadawut Pootpiang of Thailand, Teyvel's semifinal victim, in the consolation match.

Alcano then went his third gold medal in two editions of the Games after winning the 15-ball solitaire and the 10-ball doubles with Leonardo Jadone in the Philippines in 2005.

Lee Van Corteza and Antonio Gabica, meanwhile, will carry the fight for the Philippines when 9-ball team's singles action starts Thursday also at the Sima Thani Hall.

Corteza, who got booted out by veteran campaigner Jeffrey de Leyra in the first round of the RO stage of the 2007 WPA last month, debuts against Brunei's Crown Prince Al-Mehtadee, while Gabica chap it out with Ibrahim in race-to-9 matches.

In related news, Angelito Magdalena Tavada, the Indonesian-based Asian tournament and World champion, won the 9-ball singles plus late Tuesday at the expense of Sambinco (unsided).

That Istanbul had shown last the door with a 7-6 semifinal victory that prevented the Filipinos from scoring another golden double here.

Tanpinco, RP ladies slip to 2nd; RP men concede fight

By Manong R. Castillo

ROSANNA JANICE KHAOWE TESTIlend—Anya Tanpinco fired a one-under par 71 but missed out par round, but fell to second in individual play like her ladies squad with just a round left at the 24th Southeast Asian Games golf competition here.

Another 230, meanwhile, kept the Philippines to fourth spot in the men's team championship as Thailand left the field fighting for the crumbs at the long Bonanza Golf and Country Club layout here.

Tanpinco and Chihiro Ando, who submitted a 75, posted 146 for the day and 289 after 36 holes at the Filipino ladies, the leader by one shot in the first round, dropped to second spot, three behind new pacesetter Thailand.

Regina de Guzman failed to count for the second straight day with individual 77.

Tanpinco plotted the individual leader's Thai 19-Orapitpaisan, who shot a tournament-best 69 for 146, the stand one shot ahead of the Filipino, a member of the silver medal-winning team in the 2005 Manila Games who opened up with a 79 on Tuesday.

Anthony Fernando roared in a brief 72-and Ferdinand Arance and Mark Fernando both fired 74s as the Filipinos virtually ended their bid for the gold medal.

All four of Thailand's players shot under par rounds for 288 as Pipatsorn Sirawoot and T. Khongpha submitted 69s and either of the 70s of E. Ajchiracharat and Nitat Chotechuen capped team scoring for the day.

The Thais built up a whopping 14-stroke lead over second-running Malaysia, which drew a 71 from A.M. Nazmi and 74s from Edmund Ao and Amli Mohayuddin for 2-18 and 646 overall, one up on Indonesia and three ahead of the Filipinos.

Skipper Celso Gondoville has already conceded the gold to Thailand, but vowed to at least retain the silver on the final day Thursday.

"Funny we says so guys (we're for the gold)," Gondoville said as he noted how the Thais have outdriven the Filipino lows. "This course, though not that difficult, served them (Thais) well because they are all long."

The Thais are outdriving the Filipinos by at least 20 yards, and this disparity is evident when they play their second shots into par-5 greens. The Filipinos are 2-rounds and fall short while the Thais would put the eagles or are long-term shots.

Business is brewing in Thailand

IN HUDDLE

Ruth Celis

NAKHON RATCHASIMA—EXCEPT for a very few, the Filipinos who tracked into the Sahai Hotel are well known in Manila's basketball circles.

Top sports commissioner Chino Trinidad, his newly appointed special adviser Joe Lipa, ABP executive director Pato Gregorio, RP team patron Mikee Romero of Harbour Centre and his trusted lieutenant Erich Aseoja, coaches Jamel Barrell, Louie Alas, Lawrence Chongson, team manager Bernard Yang of Rogers and Baby Chen of Toyota-Ota, to name a few, are all lined in the hotel together with members of the Philippine media.

Former La Salle cager BJ Manalo also booked here with his wife and nine-year-old baby girl. He said he's in Thailand as part of an international wholesome group that is into sports.

Sir Otto, who came with his persons, the SEA Games is also a trip down memory lane. Bro's mother traveled to Thailand many years ago as a United Nations staff member and she had brought her family with her. Pato vacations only a young boy.

Jamal is a three-star accommodation, soundproof top of the line in this remote area, where life is painfully slow and laid back, as Baby Chen puts it. So laid back indeed that my friend Shea Stearns of Bailey's Vicuggo wanted to turn back as soon as we arrived here that Melon Saturday at noon.

Ouch, after four hours of hard travel from Bangkok.

When wife changed her outfit when familiar faces started trickling in from various SEA Games venues here in the evening.

* * *

One unfamiliar face that joined the basketball delegation here is that of Paul Mamaysa, a Filipino who has been based in Singapore for 15 years.

Someone whispered to me that Paul is known as an international deal maker and wherever he is, there's bound to be a big business transaction.

"He deals only with the wealthiest and the best in a particular country," my informer told me.

Naturally, I got very curious.

What is this guy doing with the Pinoy group in Bankokians. Who is he selling in there a big business transaction going on?

I took one good look at the "Deal-maker" one morning. He was dressed in a loose round-necked T-shirt, walking shorts and wore rubber shoes. He was tall, mestizo and probably in his late 30s.

I wondered whether this man could indeed make another person or group richer by billions that quick.

* * *

Not by design, I got to meet the mysterious stranger on my second day in Nakhon Ratchasima, also known as Korat.

He told me he had been invited by a man he knows to be in the Forbes List of 50 wealthiest people in the Philippines to see if there's a big business transaction in Korat, he said the young Filipino businessman dropped out in Bangkok to meet with bigger of Petroweiss-Tasse Cooper where he works.

This Filipino businessman is well on his way to becoming the Philippines' biggest iron ore magnate, Morocco is formed me.

* * *

Although I didn't get here on time to catch SF Harbour Centre's first match against Cambodia, my colleagues said I didn't miss anything.

The game was so lopsided, they said, that an official of the SF clockgadden cancelled his way to Dreamland during the court massacre.

SF-Harbour Centre faced Malaysia while I wrote this on Wednesday.

Many consider the game against Indonesia, which we beat by 28 points, as the championship match.

Indonesia outlast beat dark horse Malaysia and Thailand.

* * *

Over bottles of Singha beer and bowls of strange appetizers, a group of settlers smelled the possibilities of a Philippine quid in the Olympics—if only women's boxing is an official sport.

They all agreed that women's boxing could be a real source of our first Olympic gold. And they based their observation on the performances of our female boxers here who won six of their seven entries into the finals against Thai foes.

* * *

Speaking of boxer, I informed Jun Bermundez, of San Miguel, when he called from Manila the other day that the drinking group here has been homesick for San Mig Lights.

Bermundez recommended a place where the group could buy the home-brewed product.

Jun wasn't sure about San Mig Light, but he said Pinakor Beer and Blue Ice Beer, which are both available here, are manufactured by San Miguel Corp.

While Sol Heras is sold in stores, Jun said other San Miguel brands can only be bought in bars.

Laos may cut hoops from SEA Games

SAKHON NAKHASIMA, THAILAND — After working hard to reform its basketball system in the region, the Philippines faces the prospect of not being able to defend its crown in the next Southeast Asian Games.

Basketball and gymnastics are in doubt for the next edition of the SEA Games after 2009 host Laos swallowed Wednesday that it cannot stage the events.

Laos sporting officials said in Sam city, the capital Vientiane, did not have adequate facilities to hold the events, which are staples of team multisport games.

"There will be no gymnastics and basketball during the 25th SEA Games," Laos team commissioner Soumphu Pongsa said.

"There are no huge venues for indoor sports like those."

Pongsa said Laos intended to cut the number of sports from 43 in the current games to 25, but would not reveal which other sports were to be excluded.

Core sports such as athletics, swimming and soccer must be retained.

Thailand officials have thrown gymnastics and basketball a lifeline, saying they are prepared to concurrently host the gymnastics in cities neighboring the Laos border, such as Nongkhai, Ubon Ratchathani, or Udon Thani.

"We were informed by the Southeast Asian Gymnastics Confederation that there will be no gymnastics in the 25th SEA Games in Laos, as the president of the Thailand Gymnastics Association is currently negotiating with the Laos sport ministry to host the gymnastics in Thailand at the same time as the games in Laos, and the winner will receive the SEA Games medal like it was being played in Laos," Sompich Phuvasuk, secretary of Thailand's Gymnastics Association, said.

"We have seen that SEA Games is the chance for developing gymnastic sport for athletes in Southeast Asian nations, and if we don't have these kind of sports the gymnasts in that region will lose their chance to develop."

Basketball was scrapped from the 2005 edition in Manila because of a leadership controversy involving the (Philippines') national federation.

AP

LeBron back as Cavs score

Ford falls hard on floor as Raptors trip Hawks

CLEVELAND — LEBRON JAMES RETURNED FROM INJURY TO SCORE 17 POINTS AND help the Cleveland Cavaliers end a six-game losing streak on Tuesday with a 118-103 victory over the Indiana Pacers.

James, who played 22 minutes off the bench, missed five games with a sprained left index finger. Cleveland lost all five games.

"It felt like we were in a good groove," said James, who went a perimeter player. "Everyone knows each other, we know what we like and dislike, so it felt like it did last year when we were playing on our best basketball."

Larry Hughes also came off the Cleveland bench in his second game back after injury and recorded a season-high 16 points, while Anderson Varejao made his season debut, also off the bench, after ending a contract holdout.

Mike Dunleavy led the Pacers with 23 points while Jermaine O'Neal had 18 and Troy Murphy posted 13 points and 12 rebounds.

In Atlanta, Toronto Raptors point guard TJ Ford was taken off the court on a stretcher following a scary fall late in a 108-98 victory over the Atlanta Hawks on Tuesday.

Ford, who earned the 2004-05 season with Milwaukee following neck surgery, stole the ball and was headed toward a breakaway basket when Atlanta rookie Al Horford hit his face with his hand. Ford landed hard on his back, his head bouncing off the floor.

Raptors spokesman Jim Lefkowitz confirmed Ford "had feeling in his upper and lower extremities when he was taken off the floor."

Ford, who scored 26 points, was taken to Northwestern Hospital in Washington. Raptors Jamaica had 22 points and 13 rebounds and Carlos Boozer added 20 points and 10 rebounds as the Jazz's overcame a career-high 36 points from Craig Smith to deliver the Minnesota Timberwolves, 102-88.

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Chris Kaman and Tim Thomas both scored 18 points to lead the Los Angeles Clippers past the Nets, 91-83, for their first win in New Jersey in nearly 10 years.

New Jersey lost for the eighth time in its last nine home games.

Atlanta's Josh Smith led New Jersey with 21 points but was 8-for-21 from the field. New Jersey shot 32 percent (26-for-81), including 5-for-25 in the fourth quarter.

The Clippers' last win in New Jersey came in January 1998, a span of eight games.

In Memphis, Tennessee, Chauncey Billups had 28 points and 14 assists, while Richard Hamilton scored 27 points for the Detroit Pistons, who ended the Grizzlies, 113-105.

Rasheed Wallace scored 19 points and Jason Maxiell finished with 15 points, missing only one of eight shots from the field as the Pistons won their seventh game in the last eight.

Rudy Gay led Memphis with 20 points, 16 in the second half, while Pau Gasol and Kyle Lowry each had 14 points.

In Chicago, Ben Gordon scored 27 points and Luol Deng added 26 for the Bulls, who routed the Seattle SuperSonics, 123-96, for their most lopsided victory of the season.

The league's worst shooting team, Chicago, converted 53.7 percent of its field goals. The Bulls led 67-49 at halftime after outscoring Seattle by 14 in the second quarter and never let up.

In Salt Lake City, Mantell Webster scored 23 points and the Portland Trail Blazers won on the road for just the second time this season, clipping the Utah Jazz, 97-89.

In Oakland, California, Baron Davis had 31 points, six rebounds and six assists as the Golden State Warriors took advantage of Tim Duncan sitting out another game to beat the San Antonio Spurs, 96-84.

Stephen Jackson had 20 points, five assists and five boards and Matt Barnes added 16 points and eight rebounds as the Warriors used a big second quarter to snap the Spurs' five-game winning streak.

Reuters, AP

CLEVELAND main man LeBron James (right) sparks his squad with his return, leading the Cavaliers past the Pacers.

AP/CSP

What's in a name? Bitbit's is worth the bronze

SAKHON NAKHASIMA, THAILAND — During most noon sparring verses you expect to see coaches chewing some gum or their fingernails, but Myanmar's tenth-coach has chosen cosmetic alternative for the Southeast Asian Games.

Aung Khet leaves the briefcase, and because it's banned from rule in Thailand, he has been forced to bring a supply from home.

The boxthat is the soul of the field pulse and sets as a stimulant video forward. It was banned in Thailand not because of its effect on shavers but because the bright red spittle it produces leaves stains.

Myanmar's 46-year-old coach can regularly be seen dashing from his seat to the restroom during matches to dispose of his red residue thoughtfully.

* * *

Last Tuesday petanque gold medalists have become instant millionaires in Laotian lips that is.

Sanegpon Pelamad, the chief commissioner of Laos athletics, said each Southeast Asian Games gold medalist from the nation will receive 20 million kips (about $1,800), with silver medalists receiving half that, and bronze about half that again.

Petanque — a form of bocce-ball usually associated with elderly participants in France — has a presence in Southeast Asia due to the 64-year French colonization of the region and has delivered Laos two very gold medals at this game.

* * *

Myanmar may not be a threat to many events at this Southeast Asian Games, but when it comes to massively named athletes, it must claim gold and silver.

Filipino cyclist Baby Marvin Bibit comes close, but is in the bronze medal position.

Just as she was in the women's marathon and 10,000 meters, Myanmar's barefoot runner Bi Bi is a close runner-up.

Although it must surely go to Myanmar's voodoo competitor Honey Bi Bi.

* * *

Organizers have handed out more than 100,000 condoms to athletes and fans during this Games.

Sanemeng Saengkanokkul, chief of the provincial health office, said that the condoms were part of the Sports Fight Against AIDS program.

Dozens of volunteer motorcycle taxis with large full of condoms have been roaming the city.

AP

HOLMES: I feel good about myself.

Woods' 2007 a throwback to his best golf year

THOUSAND OAKS, CALIFORNIA — Tiger Woods enters his 2007 season almost on a par with his performance in 2000, which is widely regarded as one of the best years in golf's history.

The American world No. 1 ranked up seven victories on the 2007 PGA Tour, including his 13th major win at the PGA Championship in August.

He also enjoyed a golden campaign in 2000, winning five last three majors of the season along with eight other tournaments worldwide.

"I think this year was very close to doing that," Woods told a news conference on Tuesday during presentations for the world's Target World Challenge. "I was just four shots away.

"I had a great chance to win three of the four majors this year. I finished second in two of them and was just a few shots away from basically doing what I did in 2000.

TIGER Woods collects his third straight Player of the Year award.

"If I get those done, people would probably be comparing it (this season) to 2000, if not better."

Woods, named PGA Tour Player of the Year on Tuesday for the ninth time, tied for second at the Masters before again finishing runner-up at the US Open.

"I didn't capitalize on my opportunities, like at Augusta I did not finish the last two holes well," he said, referring to Augusta National, the permanent venue for the Masters.

"I bogeyed 17 and 18 both Friday and Saturday. You can't do that and expect to win a major championship."

Woods triumphed four times in the last five starts on the 2007 PGA Tour, a real hot run he says equal to any he has produced in terms of ball-striking and consistency.

"I've been very, very solid. I was right up there," the 31-year-old said. "I really felt like I had control of the golf ball.

"Granted, I did have some bad days in there but I managed to shoot 70s or 69s on those bad days through course management or proper misses. I didn't shoot myself out of any events."

Woods was delighted to earn the PGA Tour honor for the third consecutive season, and ninth time in the last 11 years.

"It's been a great year overall and to get the votes and the respect of your peers, that's always what you want to have happen," he said.

Reuters

'Hall' is now Holmes' home

CANASTOTA, NEW YORK — HE HAS A BOXing resume that could stand beside the greatest in the sport. Yet Larry Holmes always seemed to have to justify himself as a champion.

There was no need for explanations Tuesday.

Holmes received the ultimate validation when he took his place in the International Boxing Hall of Fame, joining him in the 2009 class are former 11 champions and long-powerful time trainer by members of the Boxing Writers Association of America and a panel of international boxing historians.

He will be enshrined in the longest reigning world heavyweight champion in boxing history, holding the title for nearly seven years (1978-85). Holmes' 20 successful heavyweight title defenses was surpassed by only five (one with 23). He was on the verge of matching Rocky Marciano's perfect 49-0 mark when he was upset by Michael Spinks for his first loss.

"I think there were some people who doubted me," Holmes said by telephone. "Sometimes the critics try to make you think you are less than what you are."

Holmes will be inducted June 8.

AP

Southwoods Chairman's Cup stakes P3M in prizes

UNDER WORTH ABOUT P3 million will be given away in the Chairman's Cup 2007 golf tournament, hosted on one and Sunday at the Masters and Legends courses of the Manila Southwoods Golf and Country Club in Carmona, Cavite.

Three major prizes—a Mitsubishi Lancer EGX, a week-long Alaska cruise for two via Royal Caribbean and Emerald Airlines, an El Nido vacation package, a Coco-Cola golfing vacation in China and an SM Hundredfest Bonus 100—will then be staked as hole-in-one rewards but will be raffled off if no one wins. A Texas Eagle saw will be another prize for an ace.

More than 400 members of the clubs have already signed up for the tourney held in honor of Southwoods chair of the board Robert John Schorpion.

SPORTS

Foot races go high-tech

STARTING NEXT YEAR, LOCAL marathons and other races will be up to par with the New York City Marathon, the Tour de France and even the Olympics. At least, as far as the accuracy of the timing system is concerned.

To upgrade the quality of races in the country, veteran marathon organizer Rudy Biscocho recently acquired the state of the art AMB ChipX Timing System, specially developed for timing and scoring active sports events such as running, cycling, ice skating and triathlon.

Other international events using the ChipX are the Tour de Pologne 2007 in Poland, the Hamburg Triathlon (World Championships 2007), the Ironman 70.3 Championships and the South African Ironman, the UCI World BMX Championships, Tour de France, the Olympics and the Hong Kong Cycling Association.

RUDY Biscocho with Ben Wyver, AMB Australia Sales and Marketing Manager, upon his purchase of the AMB Timing System (inset) in Australia. With them is David Dowling of AMB Asia.

Under the AMB system, each athlete is fitted with a chip which contains a signal. As the athlete crosses the start/finish line, the signal is detected and the exact time calculated.

According to Biscocho, the system will now be used in all his running events like the National Mile Marathon, Adidas King of the Road, three-four runs, Takbo 10 Miles (Global City Run, MID-CBN (CMBP) Takbo Para sa Kalusugan, WWF Run for Life, the Clark Free Port International Marathon slated Jan. 13, 2008 and the Cordova Run in March, 2008.

Marlon Bernardino

Age-group tennis set

THE PHILIPPINE TENNIS ASsociation will hold the Philippine Sports Commission-Asian Grand Tennis Championships on Dec. 19-22 at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

Events on tap are singles competitions in the boys' and girls' 18 years and under, 16 and under, 14 and under, 12 and under and the senior 35 years and under.

Registration for the tournament, a Group 3 Pilipa event, is going on and deadline for submission of entries is on noon on Tuesday. Entry fee will be P 1,000 p.m. to be coordinated by tournament referee Godfrey Calibo. Entry fee is 200 per category.

SPORTSWATCH

San Carlos bets dominate FBL Visayas edition

UNIVERSITY OF SAN CARLOS (USC) RIDED THE dominant school in the recent Visayas edition of the future Basketball League (FBL), winning two out of three divisions contested in the finals held at the Don Bosco Technical College gymnasium.

The juniors division saw USC-North team, led by its pair of MVP's Kris Jordan Ramos and Nathan Dilidio, impose on Don Bosco Technical College, 77-68, in a highly physical game. Earlier, USC-North defeated Sacred Heart School-Jesus while Don Bosco upset highly favored University of Southern Philippines in their opening game.

In the midgets boys' division of the tournament, it was even an all-USC affair as the school's North and South teams met for the championship with the reigning titled South team, led by Ian Ortega and Bradley Bacallao, took its crown team, 20-17, to take the crown.

FilCity hosts mountain bike

RIDING TO RAKE VIGILANCE RACING CLUB or to the people, Cebuk Sports and Adventure has teamed up with FilCity (Filipino) Corporate City to conceive with Bro's The 1st FilCity 12-Hour Mountain Bike Endurance Race.

To be held on FilCity grounds in Alabang on Dec. 15, the event is open to all ages and genders. Categories include Men Team, Women Team, Mixed Team and Solo. Team entries must be composed of three riders only, each of whom must complete a minimum number of laps in order to be considered a finisher.

The endurance race is just the first in a full Cebuk Sports and FilCity venture to be unveiling series of events aimed to attract more people to the sport. For details, call 8500846.

UGBA champ known today

EIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP FIGHTS ARE SLATED TO BE featured in the finals of the #22 entry UGBA Heritage Live Northeast Bi-day starting at 2 p.m. today at the Araneta Coliseum.

The main championship will involve a staggering prize of P6 million from the total purse of P10.15 million, according to Rene Diaz, president of Universal Gamecocks Breeders Association (UGBA).

Final titles of Lidet featherweight crown and one-two-out working and Public Animals of Team Sagupaan Charles Ito and Lemuel Cuadro of Sagupaan Dawson and Bernie Vendaval of Bauan Scalp fans do points with three-hours fights left.

'Noche Buena' derby up

COLISEUM MEGA CODE PTS ANIMAL RACE Arena in auto derby duties on Dec. 21 with P500,000 in guaranteed prizes for the winners.

Host Rudy Lagos said entry fee is P6,000.

"The one-day derby will attract many participants, especially those from the provinces, to earn precious time and revenues," said Lagos.

Meanwhile, the Mid-derby has scheduled its One-Distant" series at Tondeon tomorrow and on Saturday, with P100,000 up for grabs. For details, call 882 2210, 8920812 or 8324104.

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BASA ATENO ANG SWERTE MO!
Ateneo Grand Raffle

BSP hints at new interest rate cut

Reduction seen to match US Fed's move

IN THIS ISSUE

■ Gaming unit eyes listing on London exchange /B2
■ Gov't generates P90B from asset privatization /B5

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS YESTERDAY HINTED at a further easing in monetary policy following the US Federal Reserve's 25-basis-point cut in its benchmark interest rate, bolstering market expectations that the reduction will be matched by the local central bank during its next policy rate-setting on Dec. 20.

"The Fed decision provides us ellow room in monetary policy particularly as the inflation outlook remains not to be benign," BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said.

"Nonetheless, this needs to be viewed together with the risks to the favorable outlook such as reductions in international commodity and food prices as well as uncertainties in global financial markets which remain present," he added.

(See story on this page.)

Peso defies regional decline, hits 41.31:$1

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO YESTERDAY climbed to a 41.33 to a dollar, defying a regional currency market downturn caused by concerns over the "small" interest rate cut by the US Federal Reserve.

The local currency opened near the day's low of 41.54 but rallied as the day's peak of 41.31, supported by the strong sentiment of overseas Filipino remittances, currency traders said.

It gained another 9 centavos from Tuesday's 41.40 to $1. Since the start of the year, Asia's best performing currency has appreciated by nearly 19 percent against the greenback. The peso is now trading at its highest level since touching 41.30 on May 10, 2005.

On the other hand, the Indonesian rupiah, Korean won, Taiwanese dollar and Malaysian ringgit faltered against the dollar on concerns in Wall Street that the "too little, too late" US Fed interest rate cut would again revive anxieties in emerging market assets.

Although the 25 basis point cut by the US Fed had been priced in by investors, many were hoping for a more aggressive intervention to prevent a recession in the world's biggest economy, which is currently besieged by a credit crunch arising from the subprime crisis.

The subprime crisis was caused by rising delinquency among mortgage cards or housing loans given to borrowers with imperfect credit history and little equity.

At the rate that it is going, currency traders believed that the only way to temper the peso's rise would be for the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to again slash interest rates during its next policy rate setting on Dec. 20. (See story on this page.)

Even if the disappointing US Fed rate cut might have originated an unwinding of the so-called yen "carry trade"—or the practice of sourcing funds from low-interest rate Japan to invest in high-yielding emerging markets, local traders said the peso was not affected as much because of the strong OFW inflows ahead of the Christmas season.

Volume traded at the Philippine Dealing System yesterday was heavier at $632.5 million against the previous day's $502 million.

The US Fed lowered on Tuesday the targeted funds rate by a quarter point to 4.25 percent, in its third rate cut in this easing cycle, but some were looking forward to a bigger reduction.

(See story on this page.)

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱41.31 = $1

As of 9:30 a.m., Dec. 12, 2007

STOCK MARKET

Stocks end 1.8% lower

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

SHARE PRICES (2,000) (-1.8%) went lower yesterday in a sell-off after a modest rally in 33 interest rates, disappointed investors, dealers said.

Local investors took a cue from Wall Street, where the Dow Jones industrial average fell more than 2 percent on Tuesday after the Fed trimmed its benchmark rate by 25 basis points at its final meeting this year.

While the size of the cut was expected, investors were still hoping for a bigger half-point reduction to help the US economy avert a recession.

The composite index dropped 66.76 points at 3,605.86, a two-week low.

Decliners outnumbered advancers 84 to 22, while 38 were unchanged.

A total of 3.2 billion shares worth ₱3.3 billion were traded.

"The Fed cut its rates, but the guys on Wall Street are not happy with the size of the cut. They think that it's not sufficient to arrest an economic meltdown," said Jaime Lago of Westlink Global Equities.

But the Fed left the door ajar to more rate cuts, saying "incoming information suggests that economic growth is slowing, reflecting the intensification of the housing contraction and some softening in business and consumer spending."

The Fed also said strains in financial markets have increased in recent weeks.

Bangko Sentral Governor Amando Tetangco welcomed the Fed's latest move, saying the rate cut and the benign inflation outlook give local policymakers "elbow room" in monetary policy. (See the latter story on this page.)

Market heavyweight Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. dropped ₱18 to ₱3,848. Conglomerate Ayala Corp. fell ₱26 to ₱565.

But San Miguel Corp. "A" shares, restricted to local investors, surged ₱4.50 to ₱93, its 6-shares, open to foreigners, advanced ₱4 to ₱93.50.

Westlink's Lago said the rally in San Miguel shares was a "combination of technical factors and possibly some market expectations that San Miguel will submit a bid soon for the power transmission assets."

"There's outlays in San Miguel because it will take part in the TransCo bidding and whoever wins will certainly gain from TransCo's profitable operations," DA Market's Aguila said. (See story on Page B1.) AFP

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Gaming unit eyes listing on London exchange

By Elizabeth Sandoval-Lucas

THE LARGEST UNIT OF LEYTE-BASED information technology solutions provider Diversified Financial Network Inc. (DFNN) is studying a possible listing on the London Stock Exchange or another foreign bourse to be able to raise its stake in a recently acquired gaming company.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, DFNN subsidiary Pacific Gaming Investments Pte. Ltd. (PGI) said it had an option to buy an additional 33.33 percent in Interactive Entertainment Technology Industries (IETG) should it fulfill certain conditions, one of which was PGI's listing overseas like the London Stock Exchange or an alternative comparable exchange.

PGI last week said it already bought 33.33 percent of IETG for roughly $2.5 million.

IETG was incorporated on Dec. 12, 2000, to engage in the business of providing software and solutions for the gaming industry and has been granted contracts by various gaming regulators for the operation of certain gaming-related casinos. It currently has an authorized capital stock of P50 million.

IETG is a local firm with management based in Singapore, sources familiar with the deal said. It is involved in sports and financial spread betting and has contracts to provide equipment and software to state gaming regulator Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor).

"PGI has also begun due diligence on a number of cash flow positive and operational slot machine companies that have licenses in the Philippines with the end goal of acquiring them as well," DFNN said. PGI chair Ramon Garcia Jr. said earlier.

Garcia said that wireless sports betting, particularly using mobile phones, has been growing at a phenomenal rate in Europe, while somewhat absent in the Asian market. DFNN, through PGI, will provide the gaming software expertise and marketing set-ups in various Asian countries.

"Many mobile phone providers are at the forefront of this technological change," Garcia said, adding that in 2002, Orange, the wireless mobile phone operator in the United Kingdom, signed an agreement with oddset.com, an online bookmaker, to be the network's first wireless betting provider. oddset.com is now part of the SkyBet.com.

Financial "spread betting" is another area that shows great promise for the company. So far, the biggest portion of wireless betting in the United Kingdom is through financial instruments. "In essence" one may view these options to wager on the movement of a stock, currency, or commodity almost anywhere in the world. Proper amounts are small, but rates of hit are attractive.

The leading spread betting companies, such as IG Index/OnSpot bets, City Index, Cantor Index, Financial Spreads and CMC, make most of their revenues from financial markets.

Sterling Bank gets FCDU license

By Doris C. Dantes

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS has approved the application of savings bank Sterling Bank of Asia to operate a foreign currency deposit unit (FCDU).

An FCDU is a unit of a local bank or of a head branch of a foreign bank authorized to engage in foreign exchange-denominated transactions, such as accepting foreign currency deposits and granting of foreign currency loans.

In a briefing yesterday, Sterling Bank executive vice president Antonio Paris said the thrift bank was already holding a license from the BSP to engage in trust operations as well as corporate accreditation from the Securities and Exchange Commission to be a government securities dealer.

At present, the bank can trade government securities but is not allowed to distribute these fixed-income assets.

Since the start of Sterling Bank's operations last March, the bank's resources have expanded sharply to P3.3 billion from only P800 million, he noted.

With an FCDU license, Paris said the bank could start investing in the government's foreign currency bonds or NOPs to match foreign currency deposits.

"BOPs will likely be the bread and butter of our FCDU," he said.

Despite the sharp appreciation of the peso against the dollar, Paris said there would still be people or companies with FCDU requirements, including those whose cash flow or future requirements are in foreign currency.

Sterling Bank started operations with a capital base of P1 billion or three times the BSP's requirement. With the seed money, the bank immediately grabbed a slot among the country's top 20 thrift banks in terms of capitalization.

The bank's shareholders are JDBC Equities Inc., four Equities and Farewell Equities Inc. JDBC of the Tiu family and four Equities have investments in a wide range of industries from logistics to finance, real estate as well as hotel and resorts, including those in the Discovery Suites in Ortigas Center, the Manalone group of service apartments, Real Steel Tiles and Hitachi Global Remittances.

The group acquired Assistant Fee Four Savings Bank from the Ayalas' Bank of the Philippine Islands. Fee Four Savings was working but a shell company with a banking license and some government securities holdings. The group also bought 14 of the BPI group's excess branches.

When in the cockpit, please keep an eye on the other instruments, too.

IWC
SCHAFFHAUSEN
SINCE 1868

Gov't debt down to ₱3.83T in Sept.

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE APPRECIATION OF THE PESO helped ease the government's outstanding debt to ₱3.831 trillion as of end-September, down one percent from the ₱3.871 trillion the previous month.

If the amount were divided among the country's projected population of 88.7 million Filipinos, this per capita would have a share of ₱43,201 in the government's debt burden.

Data from the Bureau of the Treasury showed that the outstanding debt as of September was composed of ₱2.206 trillion from domestic creditors and ₱1.626 trillion from foreign lenders.

Officials said the government had adopted the policy of depending more on local borrowings and less on foreign loans to minimize the country's exposure to foreign exchange volatility.

The total outstanding domestic debt was 1.8 percent higher than the ₱2.167 trillion posted in August, while foreign liabilities were down 4.6 percent from the ₱1.704 trillion.

The increase in the domestic debt meant the government's fresh borrowings exceeded the amount of maturing obligations it settled, the BTr said in a statement. The government still needed to borrow to plug the programmed budget deficit of P62 billion for the year. The decline in foreign debt was partly due to the appreciation of the peso.

Government data showed the peso averaged 45.063 to a US dollar from January to September this year, stronger than the 46.691 recorded average in the first eight months.

The BTr said the amount of foreign loans paid in September was higher than the fresh borrowings during the season why the outstanding foreign debt marked a month-on-month decline.

The BTr also reported that the government's contingent debt as of September hit ₱923.8 billion, down 4.6 percent from ₱967.1 billion the previous month.

Contingent liabilities are debts of government-owned and controlled corporations or government financial institutions covered by sovereign guarantees. Once the state-owned firms default on the payment of these loans, the liabilities become part of the national government's debt.

Of the contingent liabilities, P65 billion are domestic borrowings and P648.3 billion represent foreign currency-denominated debts.

The government's debt stock was a result of its accumulated borrowings over the years. It borrows yearly to plug deficiencies in its expenditure requirements and pay maturing obligations.

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CHF Oil Mills, UK-based partner embark on ₱30-M research project

By Amy R. Borja

THE COCONUT INDUSTRY INVESTMENT Fund Oil Mills Group has ventured into a P30-million research and development project with a UK-based firm in look into the use of coconut oil as a source of other high-value coconut products.

Emilio M. Constantino, CEF Oil Mills Group president, said the project with the International Food Technology of UK would study a "fractionation" process to maximize use of medium chain fatty acid (MCFA) from coconut oil for industrial uses.

He said the project would also study the possibility of the use of coconut oil not only for the recently commercialized coconut methyl ester or biodiesel, but also for biolubricants, other oleochemicals and a type of biodiesel that could be mixed with jatropha.

The study likewise aims to derive from coconut oil valuable chemical properties for higher value products, like bio-lubricants, to optimize and lower the cost of local biodiesel.

For the country's general use of coconut oil for biodiesel was based on technologies for long chain fatty acid (LCFA), particularly adulterated by US or German technologies.

These technologies were designed for LCFA soybean oil, rapeseed oil or palm oil.

The proposed technology for MCFA may lower costs and even maximize the coconut oil's competitive advantage.

While exploring viable products from the MCFA technology, the research will also work on the blending of coconut oil with jatropha oil.

Last January President Macapagal-Arroyo signed into law Republic Act 9367 or the Biofuels Law, which aims to ease the country's dependence on imported, dollar-draining and pollution-generating energy sources.

The law likewise made mandatory the blending of ethanol and coco biodiesel in gasoline products.

RA 9367 also provides a package of incentives for investors in the biofuels sector, including exemption from the payment of specific and value-added taxes and preferential financing for those engaged in the production, handling, and transport of biofuel and biofuel feedstock.

Nido Petroleum set to wind up data gathering off Northwest Palawan

By Abigail Ho

WITH THE COMPLETION OF ITS SEISMIC survey for Service Contract 54 off Northwest Palawan, Australia-based Nido Petroleum Ltd. is set to finish data acquisition for SC 63 in the same area in the next few days.

In a disclosure to the Australian Stock Exchange, Nido managing director David Whiddy said that all though delays for a few days (on March due to bad weather conditions, the SC 63 survey should be completed "in the next few days."

The survey resumed last May 30, and was now more than 95 percent complete, he said.

Once finished, he said, all gathered seismic data would be processed by GGS-Swiss in Malaysia.

Nido has a stake in SC 63, which is being operated by PNOC Exploration Corp., a subsidiary of the Philippine National Oil Co.

Meanwhile, the acquisition of 661 square kilometers of 3D and 2,350 kilometers of 2D seismic data for SC 54 was completed on September 4, Whiddy said.

The data gathering, which started on June 1, were expected to be completed by mid-January 2008, "subject to weather delays," he added.

Nido last Oct. 30 completed its acquisition of 365 sq. km. of new 3D seismic for SC 54. Data processing was now being done by GGS-Swiss in Singapore.

The three surveys form Nido's largest seismic acquisition campaign to date, spanning a combined total of 5,475 km. of 2D and 820 sq. km. of 3D seismic data.

Completion of the data acquisition, processing and analysis would allow Nido to commit a concrete exploration plan in the coming months.

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Global markets gloomy even after Fed cuts key policy rates

TOKYO—ASIAN STOCK MARKETS dwindled lower Wednesday following Wall Street into the red, on fears that a quarter-point interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve may not be enough to ward off a U.S. recession, dealers said.

They said that, while the US central bank's decision to trim its key federal funds interest rate by 50 basis points to 1.25 percent was in line with market expectations, some investors had been hoping for a more aggressive cut.

Markets in Asia, however, managed to recover some of their losses in late trade as investors took the view that the initial sell-off was excessive.

Tokyo ended down 0.76 percent, Shanghai lost 1.34 percent and Sydney slid 1.3 percent.

Hong Kong was down 1.5 percent in late deals as Singapore slid 1.2 percent.

"It seems that investors want the Fed to solve all the ills of the US economy with one shot," said Benjamin Collett, head of hedge fund sales trading at Old-line Securities Inc in Hong Kong.

"Some seniors want the Fed to support the economy much more aggressively," he said.

On Wall Street, the Dow Jones index dropped 2.14 percent Tuesday in the wake of the Fed's third interest rate cut since September to try to cushion the world's largest economy from mortgage and credit market problems.

The US housing woes have triggered multibillion-dollar losses for major banks that mapped up mortgage-backed securities during a housing boom.

This in turn has led to a credit crunch, as banks become wary of lending money to each other, and higher short-term interest rates.

"The disappointment with the Fed's action will see investors once again worrying that the credit crunch and housing slump could send the US too recondite," warned NMF Capital economist John Kyriakopoulos.

Global stocks had enjoyed a strong rally since the start of the month on hopes of another US rate cut and a White House plan to help struggling American homeowners ease their mortgage payments.

With the rate cut out of the way, investors moved to look to some of those recent gains would linger that the fallout from the US subprime loans crisis has yet to fully run its course.

"All the good news is out now," said Hiroyuki Kubai, chief strategist at Tokai Tokyo Research Center. "Investors don't expect much from US investment banks' quarterly earnings later this week and forthcoming US economic data."

Elsewhere, Taipei ended down 1.71 percent and Wellington slipped 0.69 percent. Bucking the trend, Seoul ended up 0.1 percent.

Commerzbank chief equities economist Craig James said investors would get over the apparent "shock" of the Fed's smaller-than-expected rate cut.

"Economic recessions data in the US has been encouraging, although clearly risks continue to lie ahead," James said.

The dollar moved lower against the euro and pound sterling in Asian trade in the wake of the US rate cut, but rebounded against the yen.

The dollar climbed to 113.94 yen at mo 120.60. AFP

Oil drops as US pipelines restart after ice storm

SINGAPORE—OIL PRICES ON WEDNESDAY dropped in Asia on reports pipelines shut by an ice storm in the US Midwest had been restarted, and after the Federal Reserve cut a key interest rate less than many had hoped.

An ice storm that caused outages of key oil pipelines in the United States helped drive oil prices up by more than $2 a barrel in the previous session. But Dow Jones Newswires reported that at least one of the pipelines—some of which serve the closely watched New York Mercantile Exchange delivery terminal at Cushing, Oklahoma—had been partially restarted and that three others would soon follow suit.

"Yesterday's $2 increase was primarily driven by the cutlass severe ice storm that knocked out power around Cushing," said Helen Bloom, an energy analyst with Purvin & Gertz in Singapore. "But that's just a short-term weather thing, no real changes down, so that's why the oil price is edging down today."

Light, sweet crude for January delivery fell 36 cents to $19.62 a barrel in Asian electronic trading on the Nymex by late afternoon in Singapore. The contract rose $2.16 to settle at $19.62 a barrel Tuesday.

While traders saw the Fed's decision to cut its federal funds rate by one-quarter percentage point to 1.25 percent as a move that will help the US economy—the world's top oil consumer—and bolster demand for crude, many were hoping for a larger half-point cut.

Market participants were also eyeing the release Wednesday of a report by the US Energy Department's Energy Information Administration expected to show domestic crude oil and petroleum product stockpiles rose last week.

The average forecast of analysts polled by Dow Jones Newswires was for crude supplies to grow by 500,000 barrels.

Gasoline inventories were estimated to increase 1.2 million barrels. Distillate stocks, which include diesel and heating oil, were tipped to rise 300,000 barrels, the survey showed. AP

China, US swap complaints in trade talks

Chinese officials cite structural problems in US economy

ZHANGHE, CHINA—CHINA TOLD the United States Wednesday to fix its own economic problems rather than deliver lectures, as the two sides marred their latest talks with fresh complaints, the second day in a row.

The United States came to the two days of talks on the outskirts of Beijing with a long list of complaints about China's economic and trade practices, with the value of the Chinese currency, the yuan, chief among its concerns.

But China's vice minister of economic Chen Deming, said a weakening US dollar was a bigger global economic concern than the value of the yuan.

"[The yuan] is not the key issue," Chen told reporters on the sidelines of the conference. "Currently, my focus is more on the depreciation of the US dollar and its possible impact and repercussions for the world economy. I sincerely wish to see a scenario where the US economy is getting stronger and the US dollar is getting stronger."

In her opening remarks to the third Sino-US Strategic Economic Dialogue, the head of China's delegation, Vice Premier Wu Yi, also told the United States bluntly to fix its own problems rather than complain about China.

"Obviously, as export to trade protectionism and blame another country for the economic problems in the US economy is the wrong approach, which would only harm the interests of the United States itself," Wu said.

Structural problems in the US economy include a low savings rate and a large public deficit, economists say.

Proposed US trade legislation to punish China for alleged unfair trade practices would be a mistake, Wu warned.

"I am particularly concerned about the 58 or so protectionist China-related bills introduced in the US Congress," said Wu. "I need to [explain] clearly about this: If these bills are adopted, they will severely undermine US interests with China."

China's officials have repeatedly argued that China is employing unfair trade practices by keeping the tightly-controlled yuan artificially weak.

This gives Chinese exporters an unfair advantage when selling goods in the United States, and is a big factor behind the massive US trade deficit with China that hit $83.8 billion in September, according to US figures.

The leader of the US delegation, Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson, repeated his calls at the start of the talks for Beijing to loosen its controls over the yuan, arguing it was in China's economic interests to do so. AFP

PEOPLE look at a model of Beijing's Central Business District made from Chinese yuan notes. China and the United States yesterday warned each other that their booming but tense trade relationship was under threat from protectionism, as they began two days of top-level economic talks. AFP

Corporate America braces for slowdown

WASHINGTON—THE US ECONOMY IS DEscribed to a supermarket and, although Tuesday's interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve may ease its passage, corporate America is bracing for stormy seas ahead.

Many economists expect an almost two-year-long housing slump, tighter credit and high energy costs to stow US economic momentum and force corporate coffers to cosmic numbers.

The Fed, in announcing a quarter-point cut in US borrowing costs to 4.25 percent, said it appears "that economic growth is slowing" which it partly blamed on softer business and consumer spending.

US stock markets plummeted in the wake of the Fed announcement signalling Wall Street's disappointment that a heavier rate cut was not implemented. The Dow Jones Industrial Average closed down 2.1 percent while the broad market Standard and Poor's 500 Index lost 2.3 percent.

Some large corporations have cut their profit forecasts in recent weeks as concerns mount over whether the world's biggest economy will slide into a recession.

"A mild recession is now likely," economists at Morgan Stanley said in a research note released Monday, adding that further Fed rate cuts are also expected.

The Morgan Stanley economists expect corporate earnings to contract by between five and 10 percent through much of 2002. Other analysts remain more upbeat, however.

Corporate chieftains usually curtail spending and investment during lesser economic times which, in turn, contributes to slower economic growth.

Big financial firms, which have already had billions of dollars, and mortgage companies suffer as they see write-offs from the housing meltdown and credit crunch.

Investors fear the credit squeeze and a surge in home foreclosures could spill over into consumer loans and pinch other sectors such as auto makers.

US light vehicle sales fell last month to 1.179 million, 1.6 percent down from a year earlier, despite some enthusiasm over lingering 'housing downturn could drag down car sales.

Delta Air Lines executive vice president, Glen Hauenstein, said last week the airline was experiencing "some softening from some robust domestic demand" amid high fuel prices.

But many American companies and shareholders are still profiting handsomely AFP

Pandit becomes Citigroup's new CEO

NEW YORK—CITIGROUP INC. named investment banking head Sanford Weill as chief executive and acting CEO Wednesday, as chairman as Sandy Weill's disappointing investors who wanted a big-name outside executive to lead the bank.

Citi had been seeking a replacement for former CEO Charles Prince, who left on Nov. 4 under pressure from shareholders frustrated by the performance of the largest US financial services company.

Citi shares have fallen by almost a third this year, and the company has taken massive write-downs for mortgage-related holdings.

The appointment of Weill, 66, was a surprise.

Traditionally chairman of Citi's international businesses, Weill surveyed as acting CEO for the past five weeks.

Former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, who has served as chairman in the interim, will return to his duties as chairman of the executive committee.

Weill's career has included heading investment banking and capital markets at Morgan Stanley.

He joined Citigroup five months ago when the bank bought his year-old hedge fund firm, Old Lane Partners, for $800 million.

But some investors expressed concern that the 50-year-old, India-born executive has never run a public company, let alone one as big and complex as Citi.

Pandit also has no experience leading a consumer business, which at Citi generates more than half of overall revenue.

"There was some hope that somebody with a bigger name would be chosen, or maybe from that perspective, there is some disappointment," said Lee DeBoer, research director at Domain Value Management, which has $25 billion of assets and has sold its Citi holdings. Reuters

PANDIT

BSP hints at new interest rate cut

From page B1

Six of nine treasury experts polled by the Inquirer yesterday after the US Fed rate cut said the policy-making Monetary Board would lower interest rates for the third straight month during its Dec. 20 meeting.

In an interview, Hong Kong-based HSBC economist Frederic Neumann said Treasury set's statement indicated that the BSP was still in a monetary-easing cycle.

"Even prior to this statement, market expectation has been building up that there would be another cut this year," Neumann said. "The expectations are for as long as inflation remains benign Asian central banks room for monetary easing."

"It's very unusual for BSP to cut on many times. However, the window of opportunity to cut rates is slowly disappearing because of pressures on inflation to rise next year," he said.

Neumann added that the fact that the next Monetary Board meeting was rescheduled ahead of Christmas, from the previous date of Dec. 27, was a signal that this rate meeting was particularly important.

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. senior vice president Ricardo Ayes said the BSP chief's statement was a clear signal that there would be another 25-basis point cut this month.

"At least it will slow down the peso's appreciation," he said.

Chinatrust Commercial Bank treasurer Roland Soonez, who earlier saw a 50-50 probability that the BSP would pause on its interest rate easing cycle this month, said he was now convinced that the central bank would slash its overnight borrowing rate by a quarter percentage point.

The BSP's overnight borrowing rate is at 5.5 percent and its lending rate at 7.5 percent, the lowest levels since the independent central bank was created in 1993. The central bank has reduced its benchmark rates by half a percentage point over the last two months.

But those were some who believed that the BSP might pause on its interest rate-easing this month.

Jonathan Ravelas, chief strategist at Equitable PCI Bank, said the BSP's rate cut in November might be the last for this year, given the country's good economic growth numbers.

"The Fed's decision to cut its discount rate conjures the view of drastic rate cuts," Ravelas said.

US inflation keeps heat on central banks

WASHINGTON—THE US FEDERAL Reserve interest rate cut may have been a foregone conclusion as the financial markets are concerned, but the lingering helping of global inflation risks may leave some relieved.

Nagging inflation, largely from steep energy and food prices, is forcing central bankers into a narrow plank as they seek the right balance between promoting growth and keeping prices in check.

Inflation hawks will likely be heard at least hatchy in the closely watched statement announcing the Fed's decision in cut key rates.

Last week, the European Central Bank kept rates on hold but acknowledged that some members had considered a hike to ramp down rising prices.

ECB president Jean-Claude Trichet said the euro zone central bank "stands ready to correct upside risks to price stability," which sent a signal to investors that rate cuts were unlikely any time soon.

The Fed will probably take a softer tone, leaving the door open to lowering borrowing costs further early next year, until expectations that a slowing economy will ease price pressure in other key areas such as wages.

However, recent data hasn't been going the Fed's way. A report on the US labor market's health on Friday showed wages rose by a surprising, by large 0.3 percent in November.

Higher-than-expected readings on the US producer and consumer price indexes, due on Thursday and Friday, may prompt some central governing, particularly if the Fed does opt for the more aggressive half-point cut.

Global bright experts a hefty 2.5 percent rise in the PPI, which would be the fourth-largest jump since the index began in 1947.

But the "core" rate, stripping out food and energy costs, should remain relatively tame.

"While the top-level number will be a shocker, we do not expect the moderate rise in the core rate to situate Fed chair Ben Bernanke to lift out of bed at night," Global Insight's economists wrote in a note to clients.

Expecting precedence China's economy price index is also expected to increase, and rising domestic prices will filter the core rate, they said.

To be sure, the US dollar has shown signs of stabilizing, and oil has dipped below $20 per barrel, giving inflation watchers some breathing room.

However, with Opec declining to boost output and with crop prices still high, food and energy costs are likely to remain elevated for some time.

Perhaps more worrisome, there are signs that US consumers' inflation expectations may be coming unmoored, another threat to already sluggish spending growth. Reuters

Gov't generates ₱90B from asset privatization

More than half came from sale of 60% stake in PNOC-EDC

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE GOVERNMENT RAISED P90 billion from the sale of state-owned assets this year, the biggest earnings registered so far under the privatization program.

The Department of Finance earlier said the government would intensify its privatization efforts as a source of generating revenues. It also said that the sale of state-owned assets destined before run by the private sector would help improve the delivery of public services.

The DOF said that of the P90 billion, about P47 billion came from the sale of the government's remaining 68 percent stake in PNOC Energy Development Corp. which was booked in November.

PNOC-EDC was the last state-owned asset in the pipeline for privatization this year.

The recent PNOC-EDC sale generated a total of P58.3 billion, P47 billion of which went to the state coffers and the balance to Philippine National Bank for P908 million.

"The government raised P90 billion from disposals in fiscal-but, exceeding the full-year target of only P25.3 billion," Finance Undersecretary Cesareo Legaspi, who is in charge of privatization matters, told reporters yesterday.

After completing its privatization program for this year, Legaspi said the government would start work on other big-ticket assets to be sold next year.

Legaspi said the government was projecting some P38 billion in earnings from privatization next year. Up for sale next year include a food terminals lot, property in Taguig and the government's 32-percent stake in Manila Electric Co. These are the top priorities for privatization next year, she said.

The finance official said this was a conservative target, as other assets might also be offered for sale next year if there would be huge demand.

The government also expressed intention earlier to dispose of its 24-percent stake in Bai Mujdel Corp., the Al-Amanah Islamic Bank, and the Home Mutual Fund property in Makati.

Legaspi said the government was not intending to sell all the remaining big-ticket assets next year, as it prefers the fiscal space of boosting Revenue and the Bureau of Customs to improve their revenue collection performance.

The government was hosed this year to intensify its privatization efforts due to the BIR's huge collection shortfalls.

The BIR collected P575.4 billion in taxes in the first 10 months, off its target for the period by P54.1 billion.

The BIR was tasked to collect P785 billion this year to help meet the government's deficit reduction goal. However, officials admitted that the BIR target was no longer attainable.

No need to amend Epira, says Seipi

By Abigail L. Ho

INSTEAD OF AMENDING THE Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (Epira), the Senate reelection and Electronics Industries in the Philippines Inc. (Seipi) urges government to just direct its efforts on accelerating the participation of Senator Roxas' camp.

In a letter to Philippine Rep. and House committee on energy chair Juan Miguel Zubiri, Seipi president Erna Santiago said there was no need to amend the existing law if the objective was to implement retail competition and open access.

He said the government, through the Joint Congressional Power Commission (JCPC), could instead opt to accelerate the implementation of retail competition and open access, even without meeting some of the provisions set in the Epira, particularly with regard to the Napocor privatization process.

However, he said certain safeguards should be put in place, including a shield from the still dominant position of Napocor in the market.

"The early implementation of open access and retail competition may be achieved without the disruptions associated with amending laws. We believe the private stakeholders may be amenable to accepting immediate open access and retail competition, provided they would not be faced with the prospect of having to compete with Napocor," Santiago said.

He said JCPC could declare retail competition and open access, since Napocor, even under the existing law.

He said the only pre-condition of the Epira may arise and no cumbersome amendment would be necessary," he said.

Before retail competition and open access can be implemented, the Epira provides that five requirements have to be met: the establishment and commercial operation of a wholesale electricity spot market, the approval of unbundled transmission and distribution wheeling charges, the implementation of the cross-subsidy removal scheme, the privatization of 70 percent of Napocor's Luzon and Visayas capacities, and the transfer of 70 percent of Napocor capacity covered by independent power producers contracts to ERC administrator.

Only the first three requirements have been met so far.

The amendment bill, filed by Senate-and Committees Senator Loren Legarda and Rep. Lito Villafuerte, sought to bring down the current 70-percent Napocor privatization threshold to only 30 percent so that retail competition and open access could be implemented soon.

Dumaguete City Electric Cooperative, Inc. (DANECO)
Dumaguete City

INVITATION TO BID

The Dumaguete Electric Cooperative, Inc. (DANECO) CY-e-Profit, Bell City are requesting qualified contractors to submit sealed bids for the following projects/supply of materials/equipment:

Activity No.	Item Description
1	1.1 - 1.2 - 1.3 - 1.4 - 1.5 - 1.6 - 1.7 - 1.8 - 1.9 - 1.10 - 1.11 - 1.12 - 1.13 - 1.14 - 1.15 - 1.16 - 1.17 - 1.18 - 1.19 - 1.20 - 1.21 - 1.22 - 1.23 - 1.24 - 1.25 - 1.26 - 1.27 - 1.28 - 1.29 - 1.30 - 1.31 - 1.32 - 1.33 - 1.34 - 1.35 - 1.36 - 1.37 - 1.38 - 1.39 - 1.40 - 1.41 - 1.42 - 1.43 - 1.44 - 1.45 - 1.46 - 1.47 - 1.48 - 1.49 - 1.50 - 1.51 - 1.52 - 1.53 - 1.54 - 1.55 - 1.56 - 1.57 - 1.58 - 1.59 - 1.60 - 1.61 - 1.62 - 1.63 - 1.64 - 1.65 - 1.66 - 1.67 - 1.68 - 1.69 - 1.70 - 1.71 - 1.72 - 1.73 - 1.74 - 1.75 - 1.76 - 1.77 - 1.78 - 1.79 - 1.80 - 1.81 - 1.82 - 1.83 - 1.84 - 1.85 - 1.86 - 1.87 - 1.88 - 1.89 - 1.90 - 1.91 - 1.92 - 1.93 - 1.94 - 1.95 - 1.96 - 1.97 - 1.98 - 1.99 - 1.100

Bidding will be conducted on **December 13, 2007**

Sealed bid / quotation should be submitted to the Committee on Bids and Awards at the Office of the Treasurer, Department of the above-mentioned address on or before **December 13, 2007**. Price bid / quotation to be submitted should be equal to or lower than the approved budget for the contract.

The right is reserved by the bid / quotation to reject any bid/quotation, to accept and to cancel any bid/quotation without incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders and to waive any defect therein in the interest of the government.

(Sgd.) **ROSARIO D. DUMAS**
Secretary to the Board

(PDI - December 13, 2007)

PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE CORPORATION

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
IAEB No. 2007-057

Bidding for the Hiring of an Architectural and Engineering Design Firm for the Construction of Philhealth Corporate Center

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (Philhealth), through its Bids and Awards Committee for Infrastructure (BAC-I), now invites prospective bidders to pre-qualify and shortlisting and if found eligible and shortlisted, to bid for the Consultancy project:

Name of Project	Hiring of an Architectural and Engineering Design Firm for the Construction of Philhealth Corporate Center
Approved Budget For the Contract	Php35,497,100.00
Source of Funding	GOP 2007
Contract Duration	six (6) months

The list of minimum requirements is indicated in the Eligibility Requirements List. Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last ten (10) years and have the personnel and equipment needed, based on profile submitted available for the preparation of the project. Eligibility of prospective bidders shall be determined using the pass/fail criteria. Bidders' entries for hiring of eligible consultants will be done based on the following criteria: experience of the consultant (20%); qualification of personnel (50%); and current workload (30%). Only the eligible firms shall be short listed to bid for the shortlist. The evaluation procedure is to be adopted shall be Quality Cost Based Evaluation (QCBE). Bids should technical proposals under the Envelope-1 technical rating of minimum passing (75%) shall have its financial proposal opened and evaluated. The technical proposal and financial proposal shall carry sixty percent (60%) and forty percent (40%) weight in the bid evaluation, respectively, where to the lowest of a bid is the top rated/a rating, the bidder with the lowest quoted financial proposal during the bid bidders shall be declared as the Lowest Calculated Bid.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Prohibited Contractual Practices, Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The schedule of activities is as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Commission of notice of intent and Invitation to Eligibility	December 14 - 21, 2007
2. Issuance of Eligibility Forms	December 14 - 21, 2007
3. Deadline for the submission of Eligibility Requirements	December 21, 2007
4. Deadline of Eligibility Check	December 22 - 28, 2007
5. Results of Eligibility Check	December 28 - 29, 2007
6. Issuance of the Conformity	January 2 - 3, 2008
7. Pre-Bid Conference	January 10, 2008, 10:00 AM

The Eligibility Requirements List and the schedule will be distributed for the bids and awards committee for infrastructure (BAC-I) upon submission of a letter of intent (LOI) and payment of a non-refundable amount of one thousand pesos (Php1,000.00) paid to the Philhealth Cashier. Submission of eligibility documents shall be in the same office.

Bid Documents will be available only to shortlisted bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of two thousand pesos (Php2,000.00) paid to the Philhealth Cashier.

Philhealth reserves its responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

Philhealth reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, to waive the bidding procedures and to reject all bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

Secretariat for the Bids and Awards Committee for the Central Office

MR. JOSEPH D. BURGARA
Vice - BAC - I
Philhealth Corporate Center,
709 Shaw Blvd Brgy. Oranbo, Pasig City
Tel (02) 532-4444
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ENGR. OCTAVIO G. ESQUERRA
Senior Vice President
Corporate Services and Risk Management Sector
Chairperson - BAC (Infra)

(PDI - December 13, 2007)

Republic of the Philippines
SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM
East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City
Tel. Nos. (02) 920-6401 to 07 (02) 920-6446
E-mail Address: member@sss.gov.ph Website: http://www.sss.gov.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
IAEB No. 2007-057 Consulting

DEDICATED SURVEY ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION OF SSS MEMBERS (RE-PUBLICATION)

The SSS aims to engage the services of a Consultant to undertake the survey of SSS members on their satisfaction on SSS services, policies and programs.

1. The SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM (SSS) through the 2007 Approved Budget for Contingency hereby intends to apply the sum of Five Million Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (Php5,500,000.00) being the Approved Budget for Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for Dedicated Survey on Customer Satisfaction of SSS members. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at the opening.
2. The SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOIs) from qualified bidders to avail the eligibility and shortlisting for the conduct of one (1) round of nationwide customer satisfaction survey of SSS members. Interested bidders may obtain and deposit the bid documents consisting of one (1) set of Eligibility Documents from the Secretariat of the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) Secretariat, 6th Floor, SSS Main Building, East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City and secure Acquisition Fee of the Bidding Documents in the amount of Five Thousand Pesos (Php5,000.00) from the Cashier's Office, 1st Floor, SSS Main Building. Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. The bid data for the submission of the accomplished Eligibility Documents shall be on or before 2:00 p.m. of the fifteenth (15th) calendar day from the date of first publication, which is on December 14, 2007 but later than 2:00 p.m. of the fifteen (15th) day, 31st floor, SSS Building, East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City. Any Eligibility Documents submitted after the deadline shall be declared "Late" and shall not be accepted by the Bids and Awards Committee. Only those that are eligible will be notified by sealed mail.
3. Only shall be validated by hand through mail, or facsimile to the bidders who will pass the screening. The BAC shall conduct on December 20, 2007.
4. The BAC shall draw up the list of eligible consultants from those who have submitted LOIs and have been determined as eligible both in accordance with the provisions of Republic Act (R.A.) 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of 2003.
5. Eligible consultants shall be invited to participate in the bidding for the project through a Letter of Invitation to Bid issued by the BAC on May 2008.
6. Part 1 of the Bidding Documents shall be issued to eligible consultants from the address below upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of **Php 500.00**. The method of payment will be by a cash basis, payable at the SSS Cashiering Department, SSS Main Bldg., East Avenue, Diliman, upon acknowledgement of SSS Form 962. The Bidding Documents shall be issued personally to the prospective consultant or his authorized representative.
7. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the IRR-A of R.A. 9184, and is restricted, unless otherwise stated, to Filipino citizens or organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest owned by citizens of the Philippines. Bids may from eligible consultants will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in the Eligibility Documents issued by the BAC pursuant to Section 23.1 of the IRR-A, and will only be available to the Highest Rated and Responsive Bidder who will commence on such during post-qualification.

   The SSS shall evaluate bids based on Quality-Cost Based Evaluation (QCBE) procedure as specified in Section 32.2.1 of the IRR-A using competition. The criteria and rating system for the evaluation of bids shall be provided in the instructions to bidders.

   Evaluation of technical proposals shall include a Proof of Concept (POC) of RMCI's proposed survey plan and methodology based on selected bidders and shall be accepted by SSS for this purpose.
8. Interested consultants may obtain further information from SSS at the address given below from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
9. The contract shall be completed within one (1) year.
10. The SSS reserves the right to accept or reject any or all Bids without offering any reasons, waive any formality or technicality, and to accept in any bidder whose proposal is deemed most advantageous to the SSS. The SSS will not be responsible for any costs or expenses that may be incurred by the bidders in the preparation of their respective bids, nor does the SSS guarantee that an award will be made.

Bids and Awards Committee
For Consulting Services
3rd Floor, SSS Main Building
East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City
Trip # (02) 920-6401 to 07 (02) 920-6446 local 4407
Email – bac@sss.gov.ph
Facsimile number – (02) 920-7240

(Sgd.) **THE CHAIRMAN**
BIDS & AWARDS COMMITTEE

(PDI - Dec. 13, 2007)

Healthway puts up ₱200-M branch in QC

By Rainiel W. Dantiago

HEALTHWAY MEDICAL, which operates a network of mall-based outpatient clinics in Metro Manila, is investing P200 million in a new branch at Gateway Mall in Araneta City, Quezon City.

Roy O. Ferrera, company chief finance officer, said in an interview that about half of the amount would cover construction of the facility while the rest would be spent on equipment and the hiring of staff.

Ferrera said Healthway offered a wide range of medical services—including family medicine, pediatrics, gynecology, internal medicine, and general surgery—in a one-stop shop setting.

He said Healthway's Hong Kong based parent firm, Genfit Healthway, was also making parallel moves in the territory as well as in mainland China where a total of four new branches were slated for launch in 2008.

Gov't urged to raise agri infra spending

By Amy R. Borja

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY Arthur C. Yap is urging the government to increase infrastructure spending for the agriculture sector to encourage investments in farm and fisheries projects.

"From the approved 2008 budget of P95 billion for the agriculture sector, only P19 billion will go to programs and projects, the rest will be for administrative expenses," Yap said.

Of the total loans low by banks last year, he said only 5 percent were to the farm sector.

He said investments in the farm and fisheries sector remained marginal.

"The government is currently the biggest investor in agriculture and it should continue to do so," he stressed.

Yap, however, noted a recent influx of investments in the agriculture sector by Chinese and Spanish firms.

Last week, the Spanish government and several private firms had expressed interest in investing in the country's biofuel, agriculture and fisheries sectors.

Through the Department of Agriculture, the government signed several multibillion-dollar agreements with Spain to strengthen agricultural ties and open new windows of cooperation in biofuels production, agriculture, micro-financing, and coastal management.

This marked the first time that the Philippines had inked a bilateral deal with a major European country.

Ateneo CCE, PRSP offer 1-day public relations course

THE ATENEO CENTER FOR CONTINuing Education, in collaboration with the Public Relations Society of the Philippines (PRSP), the premier organization of public relations professionals in the Philippines, is offering Maximizing Your PR Potentials on Dec. 17 at the Ateneo Salcedo Campus.

Maximizing Your PR Potentials is an introductory seminar that focuses on the fundamentals of public relations (PR) and how it supports the company's business goals and contributes to the bottom line. It was designed to provide participants an overview of the relevance and strategic value of the PR function in the organization, and also to encourage participants to use the various tools of public relations to the company's advantage.

This one-day program will be conducted by longtime and credible practitioners Hero Villarica Bonquilla, APR, public relations officer and head of advertising and special events of Meralco and Judd Salas, corporate communications manager of Superferry (owned and operated by Aboitiz Transport System).

The course will also have an open forum with notable practitioners as panelists: Butch Raquel, APR, corporate communications head of Unit Network 7; Jesus Campos, APR corporate communications head of Globe Telecom; and Dante Velasco, APR, chair and CEO of Creative Point International.

Give your team a better understanding of public relations and how it ultimately affects your organization. To register, call Ateli 1247 or 894-4808 and look for Daisy Barsaza or Ayi Olofers.

MAYBANK BRANCH MAKEOVER CAMPAIGN GRAND WINNER

Student Hero Lee of the Philippine School of Interior Design (PSID) is the grand winner of this recently concluded Branch Makeover Design Competition open limited to Maybank Philippines. The prize is cash prize plus the privilege of seeing her design come to life at one of Maybank branch in accordance with her winning design. Inspired by a similar campaign launched by its Maybank head office in Kuala Lumpur last January 2007, this competition aims to tap into the creative minds of interior design students for a fresher, more stylish and highly space-efficient concept fit for the banking and financial services setting. Ultimately, the Branch Makeover Design Competition's objective is to delight the Maybank customer by enriching his retail banking experience through design and space innovations. Maybank Philippines is a member of the Maybank Group, Malaysia's largest banking group with over 300 offices in asia. Maybank is ranked among Asia's largest and strongest banks in 2007, according to Asian Banker, and most recently named as Malaysia's Most Valuable Brand for 2007. Shown with Lee, from left, are Oleg Cantos, PRSDeanding officer; Maybank Lucas Dalindig, vice president and relation head; Maybank Richard Lim, vice president and head for retail marketing; Maybank Enrique Alvarez, senior vice president and head for consumer business; and Shelvy Lanza, product management officer, Maybank.

PCOs to assist in pollution control

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATUral Resources (DENR)-Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) and the Pollution Environmental Association of the Philippines (PEAP) is conducting a "Basic Training Course for New Pollution Control Officers (PCOs)" from Dec. 11 to 14 at the Great Eastern Hotel, Quezon Avenue, Quezon City.

EMB (MOS) Director Ramon Agullo says will spearhead the training, said the PCO will help the industries to improve their environmental management, pollution prevention and cleaner production.

The four-day seminar will orient prospective PCOs on the different environmental laws and their implementing rules and regulations, EMB policies and programs and PCO duties and responsibilities.

Participants will be accredited as pollution control officers for inspection, call engineer Eng Briones and Percy Quijano of DENR-EMB-NCR at 741-8482, 741-0485 or 741-8471, at call Cathy Bagtas and Nena Mendoza of WEAF secretariat at 371-9788 or 410-1119.

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
Intramuros Together Regional

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATIONS FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office applications for Alien Employment Permits:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National / Nationality	Position
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

If you have any information objections to the above-mentioned applications, please communicate with the Regional Director.

RAYMUNDO E. ALBERMOUT
OIC, Regional Director

HALIKA? TO YOUR TV SCREENS

Feast from a succession of tables! Starting tomorrow, Dec. 11 at the Mandaluyong Sports Complex, wheelchair-bound participants will be converted into one arena by Gina Colacion! donated to charities Philippine Institute for the Deaf and Tao Pinoy, plus Mahoned Red Cross. Halika! the show airing on GMA-7 every Sunday from 10:30-11:30 a.m. with an encore Saturday, 9:30 a.m. on SIV Channel 11. Halika! is a fourth and lifestyle show that introduces individuals who lead unhealthy lives. They will then be shown by health experts how to live healthier and achieve lifestyles—or HALI—through three key foci, values, eating, a balanced diet, regular physical activity and proper hydration. You, too, can start living a healthy and active lifestyle. Don't miss "Halika!" when it airs this Saturday. Halika! Mag-healthy and active-living na!

DTI-Ayala-Magsaysay business plan competition

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY (DTI), Ayala Foundation Inc. (AFI), Department of Trade and Industry-National Capital Region (DTI-NCR), and the Office of Senator Ramon Magsaysay Jr. The competition aims to discover the potentials of MSE-based/young entrepreneurs, 30 years and below with either startup or existing micro or small-medium-scale agri-based business. Interested parties can call the DTI-Ayala-Magsaysay Business Competition Secretariat at 752-9181. Details of the competition mechanics and application forms are available at the secretariat office or at www.ayalafoundation.org, www.dti.gov.ph/bcnegosyo.com, and www.dti-ncr.ph. Deadline for submission of entries is Dec. 10.

CDC KALAW CELEBRATES 15TH ANNIVERSARY

China Bank Kalaw branch recently celebrated its 15th anniversary. With the bank's expanded services, this anniversary makeover were enthusiastically welcoming as CDC partners with Manulife, one of the leading insurance companies in the world. The commemorative joint venture allows the bank to offer a wide range of superior and innovative insurance products, giving China Bank the competitive edge of being a one-stop-shop for banking and insurance needs. With two powerhouses on board, this bancassurance joint venture is poised to set a new standard of excellence in the country. Shown are branch manager Gloria Mahusay-Arnaldo, standings, Bryan Tayone, Jr. branch operations manager; Jeff Standings, Princess Tan, MCB area manager; Sarah Jaello Sandoval and branch cashier Rina Penghuan (5th from left, standing). The bank is located at Metrobank Building, 1675 EDSA Kalaw Corner Cadiada Street, Ermita Manila. For more details, log on to www.chinabank.com.ph.

FIRST LIFE MEETS WITH PING AN OF CHINA

First Life president and CEO Peter Espiritu (4th from left) recently attended a gathering of life insurance companies in Shanghai, China. Espiritu met with Ping An's executive director and group president Louis Cheung. Shown are (from left) Ping An deputy chair and CEO Yongnian Hu, deputy manager Hong Jian, president Louis Cheung, and Espiritu. Ping An Insurance is China's second-largest insurance company.

Limited-edition Isuzu Crosswind XTi boasts 10 new features

ISUZU PHILIPPINES CORP IS ENDING ITS 10th anniversary on a high note for the last quarter of the year, the diesel authority is selling limited-edition versions of the Crosswind XTi and Sportivo. And because 2007 marks the company's first decade in the country, the new Crosswind XTi LE has been given 10 new features that further make the hero-driving burn MPV an irresistible proposition. This "Rated 10 Over 10" sales campaign runs from October to December only.

Of the 10 new features on the limited-edition Crosswind, five can easily be spotted outside. Print is the new pair of chrome fog lamps on the front bumper for better visibility in foggy conditions. The second features consists of blackout pillars and doorhandles, and a Limited Edition sticker on the C-pillars. Third, three backing up sensors have been integrated into the rear bumper, significantly improving safety when reversing. The fourth is another enhancement to the rear spoiler with third brake light. The last, and the most prominent, are the new colors for the XTi LE: ebony black and crystal blue.

The remaining five new features can be found inside, where you will spend most of your motoring time getting pampered. First, the dashboard panels have been recessed by silver, instantly making the overall look and feel of the cabin look classy and lush. Second, Isuzu has installed the Sony DVD600 display-cum-in-dash DVD/CD/MP3 player for the improved aural pleasure of the passengers. The third interior feature is the perfect partner to the DVD player: two 7-inch headrest-mounted LCD monitors for the on-the-move entertainment of second- and third-row occupants.

Fourth, a new three-layer console box provides unparalleled storage convenience. Finally, a handsome combination of black sport jersey and vinyl now covers the seats, visually complemented by black floor carpets, seatbelts and trims.

"The new Crosswind LE is Isuzu's gift to our customers for supporting us all these past 10 years," said IPC president Koji Tabuchi. "With 10 new features, this value-for-money limited edition Crosswind XTi should be very popular in the market during the coming months of the year."

Isuzu Philippines is also offering the Sportivo LE in special holiday colors of pearl white and ironside red.

The Crosswind LE, powered by a robust, fuel-efficient and environment-friendly 2.5-liter 4JA1-L direct injection turbocharged intercooled engine, is priced at P1,870,000 for the Sportivo LE and P939,000 for the XTi LE.

Visit your nearest Isuzu dealership today as the Crosswind LE will only be available until December this year. With LE new exterior and interior features, the XTi LE should be quickly snapped up by practical vehicle buyers who will find the vehicles' Isuzu heritage and value for money extremely difficult to resist.

In Metro Manila, Isuzu dealerships can be found in Edsa Balintawak, Quezon Avenue, Commonwealth, Pasig, Manila, Makati and Alabang. In the provinces, Isuzu dealerships are located in Subic, Pampanga, Calamba, Batangas, San Pablo, Baguio, Urdaneta, Naga, San Fabian, Bacolod, Iloilo, Masbate, Cagayan de Oro and Davao.

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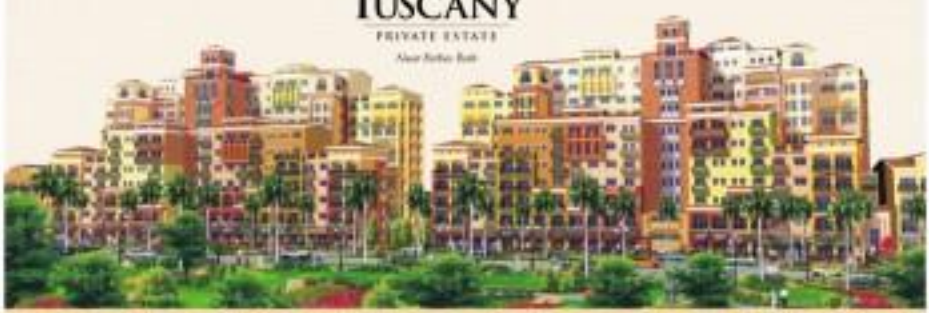

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LIFESTYLE

Editor Chris Baird-Ferriere

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- Review: 2-star rating for Mamou /C6

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KITCHEN RESCUE
Reggie Aspiras

Pigging out in a classy place

MANILA HAS NOT SEEN IN a long, long while a restaurant as pretty as Aubergine. Nothing, I mean nothing, was spared in creating its look.

To the left, as you enter, is a stylish bar. Behind it, a well-stocked wall in wine cellar. To your right is a patisserie with chillers and counters filled with freshly baked bread, delicious cookies, chocolates and other items of which are packaged and would make excellent gifts. Their cinnamon rolls are my favorite!)

Inevitably you take sight of the dining area decked in beautiful sugar sculptures in glass by Bobby Castillo. Standing alongside the sculptures are odd shaped wine glasses you can use to toast to his/her heart's content, without worrying that it will chip or break.

Walking further into the room, one catches a glimpse of the largest state-of-the-art open kitchen that is as large as the whole dining area. It has border lights that keep changing colors.

Making it in time for the season of feasts, Aubergine opened its doors last Monday with a totally irresistible spread. Sampling of what in on their menu were served: Baked Oysters in Champagne Sauce, Fresh Oysters with Condiments, Carpaccio of Australian Tenderloin with Parmesan Bonbon & Truffle Oil, Tempura Fried Tuna Loin with Sesame Ginger Dip, Pan-roasted Fillet

(more) C5

CHEF Norbert Gandler and Hans Schallenberg of ISCAHM are the geniuses behind Aubergine.

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COUNTRY COOKING
Micky Pelayo

Food tour with Anthony Bourdain

MY HOMO Bung food store

THE FIRST BOOK OF CHEF ANTHONY Bourdain, "Kitchen Confidential," was fun to read. It was cool...gaudgy, frank.

It told us just what goes on beyond the swinging doors of restaurants.

Today, more restaurants have visible, glistening, clean kitchens. But you suspect there is a dirty kitchen at the back, the "culinary underbelly" as Bourdain calls it, where all the characters of his world must be yelling, smoking, burning themselves.

After "Kitchen Confidential," the chef went on to do a television series, Bourdain wrote that during the series was going over "to the dark side." The reference to Rue Plain was because he thrashed the first chefs on TV like Emeril Lagasse and Bobby Flay for "selling themselves" in the food industry.

Bourdain wrote that the grind of day-to-day cooking was taking its toll on the Les Halles restaurant where he was executive chef. For him, doing a TV series is easier than cooking. How else can he travel the world, eat well and get paid for it?

Both the book and the 22-episode "A Cook's Tour" were successful and soon served TV series was made. "No Reservations" was aired on Discovery Travel and Living channels.

I watched his special episode on Penina Adria, the wonder chef from Spain. Being a TV star chef allows one to get up close and personal with the subject matter.

But my friend who is our lucky to get reservations to El Bulli, Adrià's restaurant in Roses, Spain, said my dinner could talk to the chef, have pictures with and of him. The problem really is getting a reservation and going there.

Last week, I received a copy of one episode of "No Reservations," Season 3 because the series will be airing Dec. 16 and every Sunday at 10 p.m. The episode is in Hong Kong, not the season opener which's a visit to Burma.

Maybe the channel figured Asians would find Hong Kong more interesting being more

Smollan with the food.

Anthony Bourdain is more relaxed by this fourth TV adventure series. And a lot more weight in being done in the editing room because there are room special effects.

ANTHONY Bourdain walks the food trail with blogger John.

Not enough for an hour

Bourdain describes Hong Kong as "a lot of food in a little space." And all of it cannot be consumed in a one-hour TV episode or even his roadster's three-day, four-night stay.

But what Bourdain does show is good enough reason for one to go back and look for these places.

The problem is, where he is eating is set outdoors almost or is unreformed too quickly. I suppose we will just have to wait for the next Bourdain book. But that may be our fate.

My travel route in Vietnam looked for one restaurant Bourdain mentioned in the "Cook's Tour." It had closed by the time we got there.

The Hong Kong episode did bring back memories of my last stomach excursion in Hong Kong (or me recall the food I had—fruity dose dim sum, tong shui or red beans soup, crispy roasted doughnut noodle roll, Shanghai fatty crab, steamed noodle, Indonesian pastry with goose liver salad, pan-fried giant scallop of dance, cuttlefish with fried ginger, apple-fried fresh water shrimps, deep-fried pigeon, Teochiu delicacies with sliced bass, double boiled chicken soup with sea tea, crunchy roast and fat-roasted goose, duck and pork.

My travel group had a guide from the Hong Kong Tourist Association who thankfully loved to eat and whose favorite song was Frankie Aguilar's "Kuya."

Bourdain, on the other hand, was brought around by a blogger named John and achief.

Food blogs are good sources of information on where to eat. Most often, the places are off the beaten track like a food court or known only to locals. The desperate with preserved meat was eaten at one sidewalk stall, the brisket noodle that made me hungry was from a hole-in-the-wall run by three brothers who serve noodle by night and body builders by day. The blogger brought Bourdain to a noodle factory that is a one-man operation. The owner makes his noodle barrel using a bamboo pole that he rides like a seesaw.

The latter of the place where the TV chef ate roasted pork, goose and duck was difficult to discern. Blame Bourdain for talking too fast.

At least I got the Dai Pai Dong, another food court on top of a wet market where bees was penned into hotels and the mantis prawn was gone.

A street scene which I found so very Hong Kong was a tourists selling cooked pork intestines who was irritated by the film crew and refused to sell to the guide believing the tourists will eat like it. Those of us who have been treated that way by vendors, waiters and even salesperson will tell their eyes in recollection.

I have always wondered if being rude is part of the culture. John, the blogger, during dinner with his companion's attitude, told Bourdain the vendor "just doesn't care."

As added attraction, Bourdain does his own kung fu scenes a la Jackie Chan with the help of Classic crew. He learns some cuisine from but regained them during a meal with the crew later.

One thing certain, on my next trip I will try to find chef Alvin Leung, controversial Hong Kong chef of Bo Innovation. With his blue-streaked hair that he wears like a wig, dangling earrings, cuisine on his menu, and a lit to boot, he certainly looks like the chef from hell.

He calls his cooking deconstructing Chinese food. Bourdain's description is "duffling the classics." The chef who tells Bourdain thought it great eating and a great show in the spirit of chef Adria. He considers Bo Innovation the inevitable revolution against the traditional in this island eating place that is Hong Kong.

E-mail the author at pinoyfood@pcfastnet.com

Promoting RP through coffee

TCP introduces world-class Coffee Master, one of the rarest types of coffee in the world.

TCP's Travel Shop answers questions, provides travel information and does actual bookings

TOURISM secretary Joseph 'Ace' Durano with the TCP staff

THE FIRST EVER TRAVEL-THEMED CAFÉ, Travel Café Philippines (TCP), will open on Dec. 18 in Greenhills 5.

The pioneering "branding initiative" for tourism promotion of the Philippine Department of Tourism, offers a menu that takes diners on a "tour" of the country.

Coffee, for instance, is the organically Fair Trade Philippine coffee from Batangas, Bukidnon, Mount Mantalan, and Cordillera Mountains.

TCP will also introduce one of the world's rarest and most expensive coffees, the Coffee Alamid (Philippine Civet Coffee).

The limited and exclusive selection of soups, salads, and full course meals and desserts also aims to give diners a tantalizing taste of Philippine cooking.

Making TCP totally unique is the Travel Shop providing personalized consultation and travel advice to customers. It answers questions, provides travel information and does actual bookings.

The TCP is designed to help restore global awareness and recognition of the Philippine tourism "brand." Several TCPs are expected to open around the world through franchising.

The TCP concept was pioneered by Kanapathi Gato of Travel Café Co., Ltd. (a company operating travel-themed cafes all over Japan) in the DOT. With the signing of a memorandum of agreement between DOT and Travel Café, the first Travel Café Philippines was established in Tokyo in 2006. The success of the first travel café encouraged Tourism Secretary Joseph "Ace" Durano to expand the TCP into a franchise business model.

Another prototype of TCP will be established in Greenhills 5, Ayala Center in Makati and in SM Mall of Asia in Pasay City with a satellite TCP in the SMX Convention and Exhibition Center in Pasay City.

Interior designer Budji Layug and architect Royal Pineda created a TCP design philosophy inspired by traditional Filipino craftsmanship. The re-design elements were used—bamboo, weave, and the ancient Filipino calligraphy Baybayin.

They aimed to transform traditional Philippine materials into uniquely modern designs, combining form and function.

The design philosophy also guided other elements like the menu, décor, merchandise, etc.

Mahirl Mejbar Inc. was commissioned to draw-up the signature menu.

Dinner and table ware were specially made by ceramic artists like Lisandle Alvarez Fernandez and Clemens Wisch.

In 2008, TCP aims to open in San Francisco, New Delhi, Seoul, Shanghai, Beijing, Dubai and London.

MAKATI Skyline's kuche fine entin sweet tinuyuma on topic one of TCP's famous desserts.

Pigging out . . .

From page C1

of Norwegian Salmon with Hazelnut Infused Olive Oil, Grilled Fillet of Chilean Sea Bass with Bouillabaisse Fire, Duvet Mushroom Risotto with Green Asparagus in Parmesan Crisp, etc., etc., etc.

To name them all would exceed the space allotted in this column. Oh, their Caesar Salad with Calamansi-infused Dressing is so yummy, too!

Had my mother seen the way I ate that evening, she would have been so displeased! Like a pig, in such a classy place! Tsk! Tsk! Tsk! Tsk!

Perfection is something I expect from five-star hotel Asheppan. Consequently, I don't think I should mind Harris for giving us the gift of sublime food, the love of hand-picked wines and for making sure that all these are enjoyed in an environment so captivating.

Indeed, a perfect venue to toast the holidays happily and in order to the year to come!

Asheppan, 2/F, 32nd and 5th Bldg., 5th Ave. cor. 32nd St., The Fort Taguig, tel. 8560880.

Kebab breakfast?

After chrashmas, my palate skills to everyday food.

Imagine a plate filled with Mediterranean kebabs of tender lulo, chicken and lamb, exquisitely seasoned, grilled till perfectly juicy, served with relish of fresh tomatoes, onions and bell peppers and two cups full of the most flavorful cloves infused rice that is to die for.

Enjoy it with a dollop of sour cream and a sprinkling of mixed aromatic spices that resides like "magic dust," on it. Voila! pick it, that gives an already magical dish an even deeper, more delicious dimensional flavor concept.

The thought of it alone leaves me salivating and wanting more!

While you are there, try their halo-halo with ice cream and drink with a cup of coffee. I have never seen coffee served with such panache, not even in the best of dining places!

SALT & PEPPER's Excellent Mixed Kebabs

I am happy to inform you that you could have their kebabs even for breakfast! Now how's that to start your morning?

Salt & Pepper, G/F Beverly Land Bldg., 6797 Ayala Ave. cor. Vk Rufino, Makati City, tel. 8404848.

Feel young

Think of treats that you will be so happy to look at, that looking at them makes you feel like a child over again!

Gel Goiri and her custom cookies have just that effect on me. She has all sorts of sugar cookies in all shapes, colors and sizes. You can even have her cookies as returnings on your tray! Really cute!

Here is a baker who is starting out. Just as you requested. Sister to the this year. Remember, the price of success is price increase! Hahaha! Call 09175367827 or 9127874.

E-mail the author at rmajeran@inquirer.com.ph

GEL Goiri's Custom Cookies

THE CONSUMER

High financial and environmental price of bottled water

By Linda B. Bolido

IT IS BACK TO THE DAP FOR MORE AND more people around the world.

Janet Larson, in a story released by the Washington DC-based Earth Policy Institute, reported, "From San Francisco to New York to Paris, city governments, high-class restaurants, schools, and religious groups are ditching bottled water in favor of what comes out of the faucet."

She said these people were "no longer content to pay 1,000 times as much for bottled water, a product no better than water from the tap."

In a conference of mayors of some 1,100 American cities, Larson said the local executives noted the irony of purchasing bottled water for their employees and for official functions while at the same time touting the quality of municipal water.

In resolutions sponsored by Mayors Gavin Newsom of San Francisco, Rocky Anderson of Salt Lake City, and R.T. Rybak of Minneapolis called for the examination of bottled water's environmental impact.

Restricted

Other American cities, Larson said, had already taken action to reduce consumption of bottled water. Los Angeles, she reported, restricted the purchase of bottled water with city funds since 1987.

She added, "By the end of 2007, purchasing bottled water will be off limits for San Francisco's departments and agencies, saving a half-million dollars each year and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. St. Louis is poised to ban bottled water purchases for city employees as early 2008."

Sustainia, in a recent speech, called attention to the "total absurdity and irresponsibility, both economic and environmental, of purchasing and using bottled water when we have perfectly good and safe municipal sources of tap water." He urged city governments, departments and executives

XAMÓN-Cocho's Pimientos del Piquillo Rellenos de Setas Silvestres or Piquillo peppers stuffed with wild mushrooms

HEAD of the cochinillo (suckling pig)

THE CHEESE platter consists of manchego de 4 años curado al romero (center), marcial azul (left) and cabrales (rincon).

On the Spanish gastronomic route

Text by Linda B. Bolido
Photos by Jim Guico Pascua

Six top chefs work together to present an evening of creative cooking

IT WAS AN EVENING OF INNOVATION and invention.

For the finale of the yearend culinary event of La Camara Oficial Española de Comercio, Industria y Navegacion, six of the country's top chefs, experts in Spanish cuisine, got together to prepare a spread of about 20 tapas (literally: snacks).

It was truly a Noche de Creatividad, or Evening of Creations, at the banquet hall of Casado Restaurant at the second floor of the Milky Way building on A. Arnaiz Avenue in Makati City.

The six culinary masters were J. Gamboa, the evening's "host" being the executive chef of Estrella and Milky Way restaurants; Mikel Arrieta of Punta Pompe; Sandra Jost-Cacho, Casedi restaurants' chef-owner; Reggie Aquino, Intercon culinarian; Juan Carlos de Terry of Terry Selection; and Cherry's Bistro in Makati's Arnaiz Avenue, chef-owner of Lolo Daf's Café.

The event, which also served as the

CHEF Juan Carlos de Terry serves Jamon Iberico DO (Denominacion Origen)

WATERMELON cooked for 12 days in a syrup of cloves and cinnamon

CHEFS and officers of La Camara hold the check donation for the culinary training of Los Tapas: Blanchez, Jun Santos, Cacho, Mikel Arrieta, De Terry, J Gamboa, Alfredo Roca and Jose Luis Romero Salas

HAMÓN de bonguo

Christmas party of the La Camara's members and their families, capped La Navidad economica de España, a series of dinners held between September and November that showcased the distinctive tastes of three Spanish regions.

Gamboa and Arrieta combined their skills to present Noche de Dos Stars, a feast of Basque dishes.

The two women chefs, Cacho and Aquino, presented the flavors of Andalucia in La Noche de Andalucia.

Terry and Manuel paired up to bring Salero de la Espalda Mediterranea or Flavors of the Spanish Mediterranean Coast.

All three chefs-trios, threes were then brought together for the culminating event.

Using only original Spanish ingredients and condiments, the chefs presented a festival of unique flavors, offering guests one tidbit or dish after another.

Cacho, for instance, completely "transformed" bacalao. Wrapping it in a pastry sack and serving it on a Chinese soup spoon, linguine Bellevue de Bacalao looked almost like dim sum.

Terry, proclaiming that the Filipino gourd was the best, paired up with Iberian pork in Manchu. Slices of eggplants were topped with ground goat meat, among others.

All the other stuff are associates with Spain, the hams, cheeses and wines, were all accounted for, naturally.

Just as naturally, the centerpieces of the spread were the Cocinado Asado Cherubito (Jamon de Iocho con Pinapa) and Arroz a la Montaña, paella with a big difference—it was all vegetables.

DINING OUT

A taste of Thailand

ODDY'S HAS BECOME THE PLACE TO GO for dishes that are authentic Thai at affordable prices. It offers an extensive menu that features different rice and noodle dishes, as well as soups, salads and desserts that come in generous servings. Bestsellers include Fried Spring Rolls with carrot sauce for appetizer, Tofu-Garlic Salad with Mango, Pad Thai Noodles, Tom Yum Soup, Sukho Thai Soup, Bagoong Rice, Thai Kangkong and Chicken Pandan. Finish your meal with the special Thai tuyo-mai-cool drinks like Thai iced tea and Thai iced coffee. Oddy's is at Greenbelt 3, 2/L, Robinson's Galleria, 3/F, Glorietta 1, 2/L, Market! Market! and 2/L, SM City North EDSA. Call 7101220 or 9111589.

ODDY'S Bakmithai soup

CELEBRATE Christmas with Hoover W Eggs and Caramera's Christmas treats—Christmas Dreidel, Starbang Gold Special Pistolenglong Pancake and the Dec. 26 Parrot. Also available are the Rudolph's Pancake, Fruit Salad Waffle and Grilled Empanada Sandwich.

SUPREME Sagarnot Pancakes are whole-wheat pancakes with Glucerna SR's special blend, served with Torani syrup and hungot sausages.

CLAMDIGGITY Crab House and American Grill presents all-time favorites Baby Back Ribs and the Clambake's King Sampler (all-American BBQ feast). Other dishes include Jambalaya and Crab Gumbo, Jambalaya and Ribs Skillet, Hamanasas-style Grilled Lobster, Lemon Cream Mussels and the Riverboat Shrimps. There's Clambake Family Seafood Feasts and Crab and Lobster Boil and the Cajun Seafood Basket. Call 6350879 or 8569760.

The secret revealed

DISCOVER THE BEST DINING PLACES IN the metropolis with "Manila's Best Kept Restaurant Secrets," a 200-page hardbound book.

It has some resources with authentic cuisine, excellent service, and great ambiance.

Authors Jaro Cabarrus and Blais Dalupadi will be at Powerbooks Live!, Greenbelt 4, Dec. 16, 4 p.m., for a special talk and book signing session. Guests will learn about their gastronomic journey through Manila's best restaurants.

The writers worked for over a year and came out with a chronicle of photographs and stories of the restaurants, their food and the people behind them.

Cabarrus and Dalupadi sought to bring back "classic fine dining," under using a mix of adventure once again, with direct seeking out equivocalue places or a special dish.

Both tourists and locals will likely find the author-table book an interesting read though it is not a strict guide but does it into the restaurants.

It is simply a tasteful collage of places Cabarrus people who love to dine out have found fascinating. "We want our readers to explore the book from cover to cover, and experience, in some way, the same journey that we took to discover all of these wonderful places," says Cabarrus.

SMOOTHIES and creamier Amici gelato in different fruit and nut flavors (right) Vegetarian Pizza with zucchini, eggplant, bell pepper and fresh tomatoes

Italian restaurant becomes 'secular'

Text by Pangie Bagsa-Reyes
Photos by Rjay Lim

PROFITEROLLES

Over talks about football, a deal was sealed transferring ownership of Amici

DIVINE INTERVENTION may have caused the smooth and easy transition of Amici ownership from a religious community to a private firm.

In any transition hostile toward, Amici di Don Bosco on Arnaiz Street (formerly Pasay Road) in Makati is the famed Italian restaurant run by Salesian priests that serves authentic Italian dishes, as well as the famed gelato line created.

Despite its simple, cafeteria-like atmosphere, pizza lovers keep coming back for the Four Seasons pizza with toppings of mozzarella cheese, ham, mushrooms, artichokes and olives, and the Quattro Formaggi (four cheese).

The pastas, freshly made every day, arrest major cravings. Cheesy.

Word of mouth brought more and more new clients that the restaurant expanded to dining area, adding a new wing near the Don Bosco printing plant's parking area close to the Pasay Road corner.

Salesian priests put up Amici di Don Bosco (Italian for Friends of Don Bosco) as a canteen for its employees. One of the priests, Fr. Gianluigi Colombo, is a trained chef, started cooking gelato.

Later on, he added pizza and pasta dishes on the usual line of Filipino dishes. After the cafeteria was opened to the public, the Italian dishes and the gelato were instant hits.

Last year, Emmy Morata, who just sold his Red Ribbon Bakeshop after 20 years to Jollibee Corp., was looking for a new business, particularly involving ice cream that usually goes with cakes.

Considering as Amici & Don Bosco's fourth good friend with Fr. "Boy" Pinga, Morata met the famed priests. By the time they finished their meal, Morata knew he wanted to acquire the place.

Right time

"The priests were not actually thinking of selling the place," Morata said. "We just chatted at the right time."

Pinga said, "We had lunch with Fr. Francis Ocatcio, who was in charge of the restaurant. At first, he was discouraging us... He even said, 'You know, maintenance is very demanding part. You have to deal with the whole community of priests.'"

Morata and Pinga did, sitting down with the whole council of Salesian priests. But, instead of business, discussions revolved around sports.

"Most of the priests in the council, including Father Francis, were football players. I even used to play against them," Morata, a member of the Philippine football team in the '70s, said.

"So, it was football first before business," he said.

After one more meeting, the deal was finalized.

"From the very beginning, the priests recognized that this was not their mission...es was a restaurant... They just wanted to make sure we were the kind of people who would take good care of the business," said Morata, who took over the business on June 1.

"Call it divine intervention. There were a lot of prayers (during) the negotiations," Pinga said.

The only condition the priests set was for the new owners to absorb the employees.

"When we took over, they had about 36 employees. We absorbed everyone and added a few more," said Morata, president of Amici Foodservice Ventures.

Streamlined

Morata's group decided to call the place simply Amici. New department were created like restaurants and development. The organizational structure from the production group to cleaning, customer service and food handling groupchers were streamlined. Sanitation, hygiene and quality control were given close attention.

But the Amici that loyal patrons know remains—still serves family-oriented meals in terms of food presentation. It also promises value for money.

Morata said they kept the things that worked well before. "We only try to enhance or improve the existing operation."

Food servings remain generous. For unfavorable menu of the ingredients are imported, including tomatoes, pizza dough and some vegetables like spinach.

The priests gave us everything including equipment and the time-honored recipes," said Pinga. Amici general manager and chief operating officer.

Customers will still get the pomito (Fettuccine e Pomodoro, Tricolore Crema, Alle Verdure), pasta (Cannelloni Agli Spinaci, Spaghetti Vongole e Cozze, Bolognese), pizza (Napoli, Capricciosa, Four Seasons, Vitelli, and gelato (Vanilla with fruits, Mint with Chocolate, Pistachio), as well as Banana Split Sundae, Mocha Cream, Mango Tango and Profiteroles.

"We streamlined the menu. We took out stuff that was not moving. We want to focus on products that people like. We improved and standardized the food preparation and presentation," said Morata.

Amici's remains a family place, especially on weekends.

Thus, Amici is probably the only Italian restaurant that serves sodas in 1.5-liter containers. Diners is served by the pitcher with unlimited ice supply.

"Here, you can get as much ice as you want just like in your own home," Pinga said.

The new owners have given Amici a more modern look though the customer-like feel lingers. Lunch and dinner records now have their meals in air-conditioned that is spacious and bright. The bright lights and yellow, green and red hues give the restaurant a younger, cheerier ambience.

The dining area is cleverly set up with four stations to handle orders: regular authentic-style food, pizza and cline-in-palate, panini and coffee, and tailored ice cream.

Of course, the hub of the dining area is the gelato bar, with its wide assortments of flavors.

"Though Amici is rather small after Red Ribbon, Morata said it was a welcome challenge.

"We were in the bakeshop business and this is a restaurant. It's new for me, but it's a learning experience. I'm very happy with the way people are responding. There's a big market for Amici. I think the real challenge is to have a business model that will work and allow it to grow," he said.

Amici will open early next year its first branch on Timog Avenue, Quezon City.

Amici is at Amaiz Street corner Don Bosco Avenue, Makati. Inside Salesian and Morton Meisner Boulevard. It is open Monday-Sunday 7 a.m. 12 p.m. for Monday-Sat, it will open at 7 a.m. It delivers around Makati up to The Fort in Taguig City. Call 8154444.

SPAGHETTI Vongole e Cozze(rotini) (red wine, tomato sauce, tender mussel sauce, and clams), shrimps and clams)

DANNY Moran (right), Amici president, with Boy Pinga, general manager

BUSTLING lunch crowd in Amici

Int'l culinary body grants accreditation to RP school

THE PHILIPPINES, THROUGH THE Center for Culinary Arts Manila (CCA Manila), is now the first country in the Asia-Pacific region and the second outside the United States, apart from Switzerland, to be given accreditation by the prestigious American Culinary Federation Foundation (ACFF). A private professional chefs' organization based in North America, ACFF has 320 chapters and 16,000 members in the US.

CCA Manila's certificate course in Baking and Pastry Arts and the two-year program in Culinary Arts and Technology Management were granted accreditation by the ACFF.

"The accreditation further establishes CCA Manila as the leading institution not only in the Philippines but also in Asia for producing the best, quality-trained Filipino chefs. It also supports the school's mission of developing students' culinary skills, while at the same time being socially responsible food industry leaders," said Pat Sobe, managing director of CCA Manila.

The ACF Foundation Accrediting Commission (ACFAC) has already sent the official certificates for the two programs to CCA Manila. The accreditation is widely regarded as a "symbol of professionalism." Specialized criteria and procedures have been established for evaluating institutions or programs to determine whether or not they are operating at established standards.

CCA MANILA officials welcoming the chefs from ACFF. CCA Manila's Penny Santiago, Paulina Meneses, Ms. Pia L. Soler, Marinela Trinidad, Susana Gonzalez, Anne Pedrosa and Pete Sandejas, (standing) Pacifoods, (left) from ACFF Michael Ty, Harry Brockwell, David Jones, and chef James Zavala of CCA Manila

"The ACFAC granted us a programmatic accreditation—a specialized accreditation which is a voluntary action on the part of the institution that requires curriculum, faculty, resources, support staff and organizational structure to all meets or exceed quality standards," said Sobe.

She added CCA Manila president Annie Guerrero wrote to ACFF to apply for accreditation in 2004. A team of three ACFFAC members, chefs Harry Brockwell, David Jones and Michael Ty, did the actual visit and interviewed the managers and students, as well as observed classes, lectures, and lab work.

Sobe revealed the ACFF granted the accreditation because of the school's emphasis on management skills as well as the holistic development of the students.

Core values

"They were particularly impressed by the school's core values, which focus on how the students relate to people. We told them that when we make the syllabus, we consider three things: knowledge, attitude and skills. Otherwise, you don't have a total development of the student if you have only success aspect. What set us as educational institution for if we don't look at all the angles and make better persons out of them?" said Sobe.

The accreditation will likewise give academy an edge over other schools in terms of skills learned from the programs offered. Students who are graduates of accredited programs are eligible for ACFF certification.

Sobe said the chef-in-training now is to maintain the school's good record with the ACFF.

"We need to further improve the professional development of our teachers through instructional and technical skills updating. Thus, we will continuously upgrade ourselves to maintain this valuable accreditation," she concluded.

CCA Manila is at 207 Kamputan Ave., Loyola Heights, Quezon City. Call 4264840, 4264841; e-mail marketing@cca-manila.com; or visit www.cca-manila.com.

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Nice, with a bit of identity crisis

By Gina Martin

WITH ALL THE buzz about this newest hit on the Serendra block, I decided to finally give Mamou a try.

Making my call, I was pleasantly surprised by the friendliness and efficiency with which my reservation was handled—a rarity in these parts. The parking lot evening brought in a cool breeze so it already felt like a good start. The jerk from our parking lot two blocks away was actually quite pleasant with the pocketing, minor party atmosphere of Bonifacio High Street that evening.

As we reached our destination, I immediately spotted the restaurant signage on the glass window which read, "Mamou – a home kitchen."

I thought, great! They're an

> At Mamou, the steak can make your taste buds grin from ear to ear

some representation already—the premise of "comfort food." At least, from my teenage point, that was what it implied. The thought of comfort food reminded me of the pot luck lunches at my dads' house (or, from "that's Itay" when all the relatives brought whatever they wanted to bring.

Prompt seating

We entered and were warmly greeted by the staff/owners. The room was filled with people and we were promptly seated. We were immediately handed menus. (*gasfulness before the lechos—mine!* yes) and without ordering about our gracious hosts, we proceeded to examine her "favorite dishes."

Since she was gracious enough and it was our first time dining here, we gave her carte blanch with the choices for our cuisine.

From where I was sitting, I noticed a hand pan of lemons on the floor next to the garbage can in the kitchen. I thought, hmmm, ok, no lemonade for me tonight.

While waiting for our food, I decided to go over the menu since I didn't get the chance to read that. The menu was three half pages and is limited in every area. I feared there might not be enough items to stay by the second visit.

They seemed to be going through a makeover or two though; the menu has an Oriental flair Noodle for a soup, Pandahyaw with Smashburger for a sandwich, Fish 'N' Chips, Duck Adobo Flakes and Soy Lime Pie with Sebag.

I was puzzled that an oriental gives a wine list to go with our steak. Funny thing is, beer and cocktails were offered on the menu. Don't eat wine and steak go hand in hand or like apple pie and vanilla ice cream? Intrigued!

Warm bread and butter immediately arrived. What a nice place... I felt so comfortable. I thought I was at home.

Crushed cheese appetizer with honey and fruit is a winner. It's a classic combination that can't go wrong. The crisp saltiness of the Cream Parlours combined with the Camembert cheese then dipped into the sweet smooth honey made me lose track of the conversation we were having as we talked.

The spring rolls arrived piping hot but lacking in flavor we had to drown it in the sauce.

The truffle dip filled the room with its aroma as it was set down on our table. The truffle oil overwhelmed the combination of the mushrooms and the vegetables.

Did I forget to mention that the appetizers were served to us *one table over at a time*. How annoying!

A meal by itself

One of the items I recommend is the Oatmeal Rice Noodle; this could be a meal all by itself, served in an elegant white ceramic bowl full of squid balls, kani and mushrooms. The unrefined rice broth reminded me of a really good congee... only better!

Our mains courses had arrived, well, one of them (at least they're consistent). The Roast Pork & Chicken was a good choice to share. The skinless pulled easily off the bone and was moist. The pork was tender, but the skin was tough to chew that I thought my

Dessert's were sub. The crust to go with here are the Key Lime and the Pecan Pie. The Key Lime is sweet with a good balance of sour tang on a graham cracker crust. The Pecan Pie came with a creamy texture topped with toasted pecans served with icing (German for "whipped cream." Why can't we just say whipped cream instead of putting a term that you need to translate for but is still confusing for some patrons?).

If you need a chocolate fix, *please skip the Sans Rival*.

That night it seemed that no matter where you were seated the noise level just seemed to keep rising like you found yourself raising your voice and making that "huh?" face to your friends.

Although this place is fairly new and still has a long way to go, its fair share of hits and misses can easily be tweaked. I can see why all is done about this place. Its friendly staff and positive food will keep them coming back for more.

And if you're wondering about the lemons, they were still on the floor when we left the restaurant.

Review card

Rating: ★★ Good

Restaurant:
Mamou

Location:
Unit 1C-1S G/F, Serendra, Port Bonifacio Global City
1634 Taguig
8583XXXX/09XX-8182588
mamoudilla.com.ph

Ambience:
Nice and charming neighborhood-feel restaurant with outdoor seating. No private dining area. A place for grownups.

Concept:
Home-cooked comfort food

Service:
Quick and friendly without being intrusive

Prices:
Appetizers P95-P295
Soups/salads P155-P205
Sandwiches P220-P280
Entrees P295-P2,800
Dessert P155-P180

Best dishes
Crushed Cheese with Honey and Fruit, Oriental Rice Noodle, Steak with Extra Pudding and Creamed Spinach, Key Lime Pie

Wine list:
None. Very limited cocktail menu

Best table:
Outside on a cool night

Details:
Open for lunch

Rating is based on food, service and ambience, with price taken into account in relation to quality.

Outstanding/ an wrong time!	★★★★★
Excellent	★★★★
Very Good	★★★
Good	★★
Poor to Fair	★

ENTERTAINMENT

Edna Ermelo G. Velasco

INSIDE

PDI Entertainment Hub
BIG NAME stars locked up for the boyzone's 22nd anniversary party. Who joined "Chess" classic Sissy Valdez and "Bubble Gang" star McDonald's onstage—and off? /D6

Pilita in Jakarta

...as a judge on 'Asian Idol'; RP bet Mau Marcelo all set for finals

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Photos courtesy of news documents sent to us

PHILIP CORRALES, THE FILIPINO JUDGE for "Asian Idol," has arrived in Jakarta, where the first-ever regional version of the phenomenal reality-talent search on world-wide television is ongoing.

This was relayed to Inquirer Entertainment, recently, by Pilita Corrales, who is representing Philippine Idol Miss Manila Fil the management company Astut House.

The "Asian Idol" finale will be aired 8-11 p.m. Dec. 31, and 9 p.m.-12 midnight Dec. 16, on RCTI—described by Manolo as the "No. 1 TV station in Indonesia"—which is presenting the show with Fremantle Media, AsiaOne holding. Currently ABC 5 is airing the whole competition live via satellite.

On Saturday, Manolo and the five other comedians—from Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, India and Singapore—met with Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

Chavez said Yudhoyono, whose entire Cabinet and family were present, sang his own composition, "Let's Save Our Planet" and gave the Idols a copy of his CD.

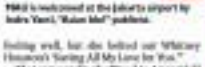
Yudhoyono then asked the Idols to each render a song. Said Chavez, "Man wasn't feeling well, but she belted out Whitney Houston's 'Saving All My Love for You.'"

That same night, the "Road to Asian Idol" TV special was launched.

Thoroughly prepared

On Thursday before leaving Manila, Manolo told Inquirer Entertainment that she was thoroughly prepared for the OR. She had rehearsed her competition pieces, "Ako ang Magwagi" and "Forever" with stage director Freddie Santos and voice coach Zoilobet Zuñiga. The musical arrangements arrived by e-mail two days before. (The contestants are expected to sing in English and in their native languages.)

Manolo relayed her basic Jakarta schedule to Inquirer via a text message on Saturday which she ended as follows: "Jerusalem. Then's friends you."



Pilita is welcomed at the Jakarta airport by Indra Yanti, "Asian Idol" publicist.

Led Zep should take this show on tour — soon

LONDON—AFTER THE PERFORMANCE, led Zeppelin really must go on tour.

The reunited rock 'n' roll legends were on-par Monday (Tuesday in Manila) in their first full concert in nearly three decades, mixing in classics like "Stairway to Heaven" and "Black Dog" with the thumping "Rock'n' and the band making "Immigrant Gathered."

The band's three surviving members—singer Robert Plant, guitarist Jimmy Page and bassist keyboardist John Paul Jones—were joined by the late John Bonham's son Jason on drums.

Bonham kicked off the sold-out benefit show at the O2 Arena, pounding out the beat before the others joined in on a near-perfect "Good Times Bad Times."

They followed that with "Ramble On," in strong talk that the 59-year-old Plant could no longer reproduce his trademark wail.

With his hairstyle closer shut resembling his trained days, Plant roamed the stage looking out his other hit.

The star

Page, 63, showed he still has the touch as well. Slipping out his patented riffs all night, he got the spotlight on himself when the band played "Dazed Way of Dying."

Plant and Page have combined to open "Nobody's Built But Mine," a song that starts with another classic Page riff and then gets bodyblown Plant reminding the same warmth.

Still, it was Bonham who may have been the star of the show. At 41, he is older than his father was— 32—when he drinked to death on his same stand in 1980.

Bonham's flawless performance and driving beat were much the other members of the band snuck in sure at the end of "Black Dog."

After "The song remains the same," Plant announced. Same's Bonham, drums!"

The 16-song set list produced few surprises. They did many of the songs expected, such as "No Quarter" and "Trampled Under Foot," and the entire show lasted a bit more than two hours, mainly because of encore "Whole Lotta Love" and "Rock and Roll."

To be sure, fans are hoping that the band does this again, and soon. Chris Lehmann, AP

TOUSSE! left, after the attack

Medical journey

CHRIS ARIAS TARRON AND DR. SAGAR Gupta tell the story of a young Iraqi boy's journey to recovery from a horrific attack in "CNN Special Investigations Unit: Rescuing Ronald" on Dec. 15, 2 p.m. and 11 p.m. and Dec. 16, 2 p.m.

The 9-year-old Ronald was one day doused in gasoline by masked assailants and set on fire, resulting in terrible body burns.

Enter, CNN Baghdad-based news producer, spotted the story on CNN International.

Through CNN's on-the Impact Your World initiative, viewers track contributions to the Children's Burn Foundation, allowing Ronald and his family to flyto the US for treatment.

Sitti...
I'll be home for christmas
A Homecoming Concert by the Queen of Balita Nova featuring Philippine Idols Pinatas Jian Nieto and the World Class Talents of the Las Piñas Boys Choir
at The Las Piñas Bamboo Organ Church Courtyard
on December 13, 2007 at 8 pm

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'Harry Potter' 5
IN "HARRY POTTER and the Order of the Phoenix," Lord Voldemort has returned, but the Ministry of Magic is doing everything to keep the world of wizardry from knowing the truth.
Ron and Hermione convince Harry to secretly train a group of students for the wizardry war ahead.
The fifth in the Potter series is now available on a two-disc special edition from Warner Home Video.
'Lions to Wol'
"Lions to Wol," now available on DVD from Warner Home Video, follows the tale of newly engaged Ben (Hugh Dancy) and Sadie Jones (Mandy Moore).
Before their trip to the altar, they are put through [illegible] (Robin Williams) marriage prep course consisting of outlandish homework and outings in search of privacy.

AT THE CINEMAS

GLORIETTA 1	1 [illegible]	2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	3 HOUSE OF HORROR	4 HITMAN
GLORIETTA 4	1 ENCHANTED	2 THE KINGDOM	3 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE	
GREENBELT 1	4 [illegible]	5 BATMAN	6 THE WOLFMAN COMPANION	7 DEATH PROOF
GREENBELT 2	1 PAPER DOLLS	2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS		
	1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	2 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE		
	3 DEATH PROOF	4 GONE BABY GONE	5 EASTERN PROMISES	
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	2 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN COMPASS		
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 DEATH PROOF	2 [illegible]	3 THE KINGDOM	
	1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	2 THE GAME PLAN	3 FRED CLAUS	4 EASTERN PROMISES
MARKET! MARKET!	1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	2 DEATH PROOF		
	3 HOUSE OF HORROR	4 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE	5 [illegible]	
TRINOMA	1 BATMAN	2 DEATH PROOF	3 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE	4 HOUSE OF HORROR
	5 ENCHANTED	6 CATACOMB	7 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

Glorietta — Philippine Madrigal Singers with Robert Sotto and Ken Rivero; December 8, 6pm; Glorietta 4 Park

Greenbelt — The Sassy Jam Nights; December 6, 7:30pm; Greenbelt 3 Al Fresco Area

Alabang Town Center — Southern Musicians Concert; December 8, 4pm; Town Plaza

Ayala Center Cebu — FREE Christmas Gift Bag for every P800 worth of purchase; December 1 to 31

Market! Market! — Christmas Divas: 8 Christmas Musicals; December 8, 7pm; Activity Center

Christian's — Repertory Philippines presents PIECES OF THE ROOF; December 8, Shows from 10, 2007; For inquiries, pls. call 687-0742; or visit www.repertoryphilippines.com

Ayala Museum — ANTON THE MUSEUM by Jomtien Ibañez; November 22nd-January 13, 2008; Ground Floor Gallery; For more info, pls. call 757-7117 ext 811 loc. 10 or email museum_inquiry@ayalamuseum.org

Tsi Nonna — Christmas Classic featuring Bonita Manzano; December 8, 6pm; Activity Center
Rhythm Academy: San Concepcion with the Augustinian Lolitz; December 8, 6pm; Activity Center

paperDOLLS
paperDOLLS
a Documentary Film by Tonet Reynoso
This film showing is dedicated in memory of Vally Lorenzo, one of the core team, who was found dead on the streets of Bohol. Portion of the proceeds will go to Vally Lorenzo family.
DECEMBER 12-18, 2007
GREENBELT 1 CINEMA

Taylor Hicks Live
Glorietta
December 10, 2007
Glorietta 4 Park
7:00pm
Greenbelt
December 11, 2007
Greenbelt 3 Park
6:00pm
Trinoma
December 20, 2007
Activity Center
7:00pm
Meet & Greet after each show

Chemical Romance in Manila

THE MULTI-PLAT-inum-selling American rock band My Chemical Romance is performing on Jan. 23, 2008 at the Fort Bonifacio Open Field, Taguig.

Formed shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, MCR is currently composed of singer Gerard Way, bassist Mikey Way, guitarists Frank Iero and Ray Toro, and drummer Bob Bryar.

The band recorded its indie-label debut album in 2002 before being signed to Reprise Records, which released its "Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge" album in 2004.

It sold more than one million copies.

Dangerous

The success was replicated with 2006's "The Black Parade," the album that established MCR as a world-famous group whose music has been the subject of debate among fans and the media.

Band members have rejected the term "emo" to describe their sound, preferring to call it simply as rock or, as their website says, "evolved, dangerous pop." They are Queen, Thursday, Sat. Midas, The Misfits, Weezer/The Beatles and the Beastie Boys as their main influences.

The MCR gig in Manila is being promoted by Vhot Concerts. Call 687-6130 loc. 520 and 745. Pamela Encarnacion

OPENS DECEMBER 19

A science-fiction writer is about to get the biggest inspiration of his life... from a kid out of this world.

martian child

Based on the High Award A Movie Award winning short story by renowned sci-fi visionary David Gerrold.

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amanda peet
and
bobby coleman

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GALLERIA

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS - TRX	6 ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE
2 HOOD of HORROR	7 ENCHANTED
3 CATACOMBS	8 IndieSine: 3 DAYS of DARKNESS
4 BATANES	9 HITMAN
5 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF	10 BEOWULF

ERMITA

1 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF	6 ENCHANTED
2 IndieSine: 3 DAYS of DARKNESS	7 HITMAN / BEOWULF
3 HOOD of HORROR	8 BATANES
4 CATACOMBS	9 ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE
5 PASUKOB	10 THE GOLDEN COMPASS

METRO EAST

1 ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE	5 EASTERN PROMISES
2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	6 BEOWULF / ENCHANTED
3 CATACOMBS	7 HOOD of HORROR
4 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF	8 BATANES

NOVALICHES

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	3 BATANES
2 HOOD of HORROR	4 PASUKOB

PIONEER

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	3 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF
2 ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE	4 CATACOMBS

STA. ROSA

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 GAME PLAN
3 HITMAN
4 LIONS FOR LAMBS / BATANES

LIPA

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 BATANES
3 HITMAN
4 BOOGEYMAN 2

DASMARIÑAS

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 GHOST SON
3 HOOD of HORROR
4 BATANES

IMUS

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 GHOST SON
3 HOOD of HORROR
4 BATANES

ANGELES

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 FRED CLAUS / BOOGEYMAN 2
3 WE OWN THE NIGHT
4 THE KINGDOM

TARLAC

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 LIONS FOR LAMBS / BATANES
3 ENCHANTED

STARMILLS

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	4 THE KINGDOM
2 FRED CLAUS	5 BOOGEYMAN 2
3 WE OWN THE NIGHT	6 BATANES

BACOLOD

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	5 LUST CAUTION
2 HITMAN	6 IndieSine: 3 DAYS of DARKNESS
3 MR. MAGORIUM's WONDER EMPORIUM	7 FRED CLAUS
4 THE KINGDOM	8 MR. MAGORIUM's WONDER EMPORIUM

ILOILO

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	4 BOOGEYMAN 2
2 HITMAN	5 GAME PLAN
3 FRED CLAUS	6 BATANES

A diaries novella by CARLO J. CAPARAS

To have and to hold

Art: ARNELA. AVETRIA

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Mayor of Hollywood
5 Of the Vatican
9 Common "genius" suffix
14 Container with a flap
15 Kind of alert?
16 Deducted, perhaps
17 AAMP members
19 Start of Green Eyes lyric
20 Touristy
21 Desert
22 Mexican hides
23 Wings whoosh
25 Part of of eyes
30 Lumberjack
31 Miscellaneous
33 Stump feat
37 Prohibition
38 ___ Nelson
40 Part 1 of quiz
41 Farmington Beach, Ca.
42 Cardiac rhythm
43 "I'm a wimp at blank"
44 Dwight
45 Part 2 of quiz
46 Creature with claws
47 Having wings
48 Newspaper employee
49 Mobile number?
54 End of quiz
55 Class
56 Soft hoods
59 Long term memory
60 Brass valve
61 Shoe size
71 Rhodes
72 Hanoi's
73 Kids national group

DOWN
1 Driver's number
2 Fly catcher
3 Tangling
4 Rolls of Cambridge
5 Exclamations of satisfaction
6 Sort of beverage
7 Dancer wannabe?
8 Cause substance
9 Cause of a weekend
10 Craftsperson
11 Eye color
12 Bathroom powder
13 Night vision
18 Instant gratitude
24 Pro ___ (for your service fully)
25 Broken weapon
26 Ancient Greek
27 Pre-owned
28 Photographer's assistant
29 Post-quiz feeling
31 Rise
32 Intelligence test reports
34 ___ the page
35 Party worker
36 Medicine
38 Trustees' assets
39 Liquify
40 Computer eagle
42 Most wrinkly, barely
43 Loaded stack
44 Recovery needed
46 Infidels
47 Kerrie of "Otis"
48 Hammered
50 Eskimos
51 Exhibitors
52 Nolan's ads
53 Use word for sort
58 Portuguese "Green's warrior"
62 Burial subterranean
63 Comic down to earth
64 Chopping block
65 Persona Non?
66 Atone

By Mark F. Hershberg
12/13/07

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

THIS WEEK TODAY: Some thoughts, ideas and discovery. Beware your assumptions are bad and you also ignore the little things around you. Love and romance are in the air. Don't be afraid to take risks. Be ready for a powerful pull ahead. It could be one of the best weeks of your life.

Birthdate of: Jason Fraser, actor; Nicole Bobek, actress; Carlos Bremyer, flamenco guitarist.

ARIES (March 21 to April 20): Short spans of travel. If friendly is heightened today. You're interested to learn more about other cultures, different religions and what other people believe.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 21): Some setbacks in personal, financial affairs are likely. In particular, you're apt to be careless with money today. Other side someone is bound to benefit. People have a soft, compassionate, calming attitude today.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Role in the spotlight is assured. Be careful with partners in close friends. Others are demanding, likely to what you have to say.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You get a chance to make extra money with commissions and investments. This is because you're in the right place at the right time and know how. You're very good at timing.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is a wonderful day to make plans, socialize with relatives, friends and associates. You're very outgoing and personable today. You're also very helpful to others.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You're in a fantastic cycle for love, romance and social activities. Your personality is very appealing today. Others are attracted to you. Be careful, however, that you don't overdo things and become overbearing.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Don't worry if you make a mistake today. Others are willing to forgive you. Your charm is at its peak. You're very popular and you're able to make a favorable impression on others. Be careful, however, that you don't overdo things and become overbearing.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Outstanding day! You'll spend money on luxuries and your own things. This is because you're in the right place at the right time. Be careful of spending too much today. However you also will want to be considerate to others.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You have a wonderful day for love, social and entertainment activities. You're fantastic at romance. You're quite attractive and you're quite good at flirting. Whatever you can do to make the world a better place, you will do today.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): It's easy for you to achieve and get ahead today. Others are willing to help you. Be careful, however, that you don't overdo things and become overbearing. You're also very good at dealing with others.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Concentrate on your work today. People are willing to listen to your ideas. Others are willing to help you. Be careful, however, that you don't overdo things and become overbearing. You're also very good at dealing with others.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You might particularly romance with other people today. You are very popular and you're able to make a favorable impression on others. Be careful, however, that you don't overdo things and become overbearing. You're also very good at dealing with others.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Concepts Sudoku By Dave Green

			7	3	1			
		1				2		
	4			9			6	
		5				4		
			6	7	3			
		7				8		
	9			2			7	
		2				3		
			4	6	8			

Difficulty Level ★★★

12/13

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

1	9	6	8	4	7	2	3	5
3	7	4	2	3	1	5	8	9
8	3	2	9	5	6	1	4	7
9	4	5	1	2	3	8	7	6
5	8	9	3	7	9	4	1	2
7	2	1	4	9	8	6	9	3
6	8	7	3	1	2	9	5	4
4	1	3	8	9	5	7	2	8
2	5	9	7	8	4	3	6	1

Essence of genius focus of new series

LAST DEC. 2, ME JUMBEI home to catch "My Brilliant Brain" on the National Geographic Channel. The new documentary series appealed to me because it investigates the essence and development of genius.

We find the subject particularly interesting in the light of an earlier observation by an expert on human intelligence that we make great use of only a fraction of our brains' potential, so much more work can, and needs to, be done.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

Phenomenal

Sure enough, last Monday's episode featured on a young woman trained by her father to become a world-class chess player. His achievement is regarded as phenomenal because, not so long ago, chess experts felt that no woman could excel in the sport.

They attributed this to the perceived difference in the ways boys' and girls' brains were "wired." But the female grandmaster's success has shown that "nature-linked factors" can be circumvented by "nurture."

In this instance, the developmental factor in the form of intense parental attention every day during which the girl was taken by her father through the "history" of chess, especially the thousands of actual games that exemplified the many different moves a player could choose to take, to assign victorious in all sorts of situations.

Thus, when the little girl started competing in tournaments, she brought along with her not just her natural aptitude for chess, but also a deep and broad understanding of the possibilities of the sport—up to the point where she didn't even have to think about her moves.

Instead, she relied on a sort of "trained intuition," based on her extensive knowledge of a great variety of actual games played by grandmasters throughout the history of the sport.

The episode's point was that "genius" can be developed. It showed how the girl's rigorous training had made her brain develop in a way that made it easy for her to instantly access all the knowledge she had gained, so she could "intuit" how a new game should be played—and win.

While the episode was distinctly positive in its view of the relationship of hard work to genius, it also underscored the fact that developing it could be exceedingly difficult.

Exceptions

It required the female grandmaster to devote practically the whole day to studying her chosen sport.

How many youths would do so forward? How many parents would devote their time to the development of genius? The answers help explain why genius as we know the exception than the tendency rule.

But, she lessons taught by "My Brilliant Brain" could motivate more people to do what it takes to develop their own intellectual potential—and that's all to the good!

ALIKAS the life of the party, "Divas" stamp Tessa Prieto-Valdes shares the stage with "Bubble Gang's" Ogie Alcasid

PAOLO Prieto, bayaw nga presidente, with his Dreams of Cloudbusk Cebu brunch.

PDI CHAIR Maria Prieto, left, and editor in chief Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc

Welcome to the PDI Entertainment Hub

THE INQUIRER BUILDING IN Makati City turned into an entertainment hub on Saturday as big-name celebrities turned up for our 22nd anniversary party.

Boom went the first kicked off the program with the new Inquirer theme song, "Our Inquirer," about the convergence of subsidiaries' newsroom group.

"Pinoy Pop Superstar's" Jennylyn Mercado and Shamcey Supsup, both Hollywood Olympic champions, sustained the momentum, engaging the crowd with their powerful pipes. So did young singing group Sugar Boy, composed of "Pop Star Kids" finalists, whose group-only sensitivity more fully appreciated.

PDI president Sandy Prieto-Romualdez

"Studs" stands up of "Starstruck" graduates Mike Tan and Dan Ignacio and GMA talents Kevin Fiore and Edgar Garcinan.

But the virtual gender-climb was breached by Bamboo, whose rendition of "Bubble gum," "Tambuli" and "Harpo" made both men and women—including top execs—this from their seats to sing along and dance.

It was surely a tough act to follow, but Sleeping Beauty gave an equally spirited performance of her own hits.

Prieto sister Ogie Alcasid and Michael V ended punch lines with program hosts Anne Curtis, Iza Calzado and Annie Ayling.

The "Bubble Gang" duo also joined for singalongs with the audience, and partnered with Inquirer columnist Tessa Prieto-Valdes, "Celebrity Duets" grand champion.

The program was peppered with games, raffle draws and departmental presentations—party staples that buzz-wise employees look forward to every year, along with the celebrity sightings.

BELTERS Bronze Equinoxes, left, and Jocelyn Viray

KATRINA Halili, right, gives newsday desk chief Robert Alabastro his raffle prize.

MICHAEL V. center, joins the Chaotikos staff, grand prize winner in the talent competition for employees.

INK POTO

BAMBOO ROCKS...and everyone wants a piece of him.

MAKATI Mayor Jejomar Binay—left, with emcee Jessie Adina—raffles off P2,000 from his own pocket.

SUSAN POP a.k.a. Singa-ma, indeed.